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# PATERSON'S PARISH

## A LIFETIME AMONGST THE DISSENTERS

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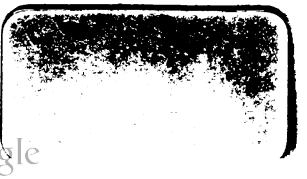

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# Paterson's Parish

## A LIFETIME AMONGST THE DISSENTERS

BY

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.

*Minister of the City Temple, London.*

London

THOMAS BURLEIGH.

1898

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# PART I.

## *ACTION.*



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# PATERSON'S PARISH.

## CHAPTER I.

You would like to know how the average dissenting minister lives? Let me tell you. I know that minister well, for I have companied with him for a lifetime. In what social splendour he lives you shall hear, and you yourself shall judge to what motive, if not to an inspired and sensitive conscience, his manner of life is to be traced. Let us make the acquaintance of Arthur Paterson.

In the brick-built town of Mixford there is one long ill-paved street, with several small and worse-paved streets branching off it, in one of which inferior streets lived Mr. Paterson, the Independent minis-

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ter, in a house probably rented at fifteen pounds per annum. A room in front, a room behind, and two rooms to match above, with a tiny kitchen gloomily looking upon a brick-paved yard, about seven feet square, constituted the limited habitation of this devoted champion of Nonconformity, whose vigorous denunciations of the National Church were vehemently applauded by the Dissenters who starved him. My friend, the gentlest of brave creatures, was a widower, under fifty years of age, whose small domestic establishment was ably directed by Janet Snow, as faithful and capable a servant as ever breathed.

Janet had been with Mr. Paterson ever since he settled in the ministry; had attended Mrs. Paterson in her last illness; had been all but a mother to the sweet little baby who went to heaven before the life-clock struck three; and, in short, Janet had become part and parcel of the Paterson household. To hear Paterson upon the great question of Dissent, you would suppose that he was the most violent and despotic of men, a red-handed revolutionist, a very desperado. His con-

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troversial epithets were forged in the fire of his personal conscientiousness. He had no idea that he was using strong language when he denounced the clergy as dumb dogs that cannot bark, curates as mumbling puppies not fit to be at large by themselves, patrons as jobbers in the souls of men, and bishops as overfed old women, who neither understood the spirit of the age nor grasped the purpose of the kingdom of heaven. All this was quite in harmony with my friend's conception of Christian charity. His murder was all in his words. To do him justice, his exaggeration was not confined to his aversions; it expanded all his partialities, and magnified every kindness that was shown to him into an unparalleled act of generosity. This very spirit, so faulty from a merely literal point of view, enabled him to look gratefully upon his inadequate income, and to wonder how the people could afford to give him so much. Janet did not form the same estimate of the people, and although she might through long association have become affected by her pastor's use of strong language, yet there was a solid basis of truth under all her

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unfavourable criticism. As I waited several hours for Paterson's return from a great Nonconformist uproar, created under the pleasing form of "a demonstration," I had an opportunity of hearing what an honest woman had to say about chapel morals in general. If her style halted here and there, through want of logical connection, there was no break in the consistency of her meaning, nor did her energy suffer in consequence of her grammar.

"And him going about in a coat like a looking-glass, so shiny in the back, and me afeared to brush it, as it might come to pieces in my hand."

"Perhaps, Janet," said I, "the people cannot afford to do any more."

"The people be broiled!" said Janet; "there's that little chubby-faced painter of a deeking who calls himself Mr. Robinson, —though what right he has to be mistered I could never tell—has had two topcoats since March was a twelvemonth, and his bouncing wife has had a sealskin jacket and a velvet mantle in the same time, and there they sit as smug as two rat-catchers, and a-staring at him, when they might see

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that his waistcoat buttons have had their heads brushed off. And they call theirselves deekings and officers, and all such fine names."

"The deacons," said I, "are expected to look after the pastor."

"And so they may do," said Janet, "but they take care to let him get out of sight first. Look after him! my patience! It would be a bad job for him if nobody looked after him better. There's that pimple-faced cripple, always a-going about swing-swang up and down the aisle a-twisting his gold chain, and a-shaking hands wi' people as can ask him to tea; he says to me, 'Janet, how's our dear pastor to-day?' and says I to myself, 'He's about the cheapest bit of furniture there is in this dirty brick chapel, and it would be better for you to part wi' that gold chain and buy him a new hat wi' the money, than stand chattering there.'"

"But some of the people are kind, Janet. I know Mr. Paterson thinks so."

"Aye, aye, that's true. But who are they?" Janet stood back and waited.

"Of course, I don't know their names."

"But I do," said Janet. "There's old

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Betty Black, as brought him two pocket-handkerchiefs of her own hemming, as could ill afford it, I know ; and there's old Billy Freshwood, as killed a pig a week since, and brought three black puddings and two pounds of spare-rib ; and there's old cobbler Swinburne, and nothing would keep him back from making his minister a present of a pair of thick boots, as I must say he was never measured for them, and if he was a young man, his feet might grow into them, but the cobbler's kindness was all the same for that ; and more one may say, for he needn't have put so much leather into them, and they lace up the front, and when they're on they look rather nice with the brass lace-holes."

"Well, then," said I, "there's a bright side to the picture as well as a dark one."

"Aye, aye ; had need be. Only mole rats can always live in the dark. I don't say there's not a bright side ; but who makes it ? Not that Robinson, as calls himself Mister, though I see him every day going up and down a ladder wi' a paint-pot in his hand, and a-beckin' and a-bowin' to all the church people as he thinks he can get a bit o' house-paintin'

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from, and then coming to chapel, and blowin' himself out over a hymn-book as big as a cushion, and lookin' round as if he never saw a paint-pot, and his wife sitting there with gold spectacles on, and fluffing herself up and down like a sack o' feathers. Never a thing do they send to this house. But there's old Neddy Foster, the baker, never puts a spice loaf into the oven without putting in a little one for the minister; and he doesn't want to be mistered and fussed about, and people to think he's a foot higher nor anybody else. As for deekings, I wish they was all broiled in their own prespiration, or that they was sent for to the world of glorious immorality they are always a-ravin' about, and as they'll never get into, I do believe; leastways if they does, I don't want to."

"But Janet," said I, in a pacifying tone, "the deacons may do favours you never hear of."

"Not they," said Janet; "he's not the man to keep good news from me. Lor' bless you, if anybody did him a kindness, he would run in just like a little child and tell me all about it, and say I must not think so hardly of the people, and all sorts

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of nonsense. But I am glad to say there's a man come to chapel now as is kinder to master nor anybody ever was as ever I knew, and I have known them all ; and I do hope they won't make a deeking of him, 'cause the moment they make a deeking of a man he gets as uppy and cheeky as the mayor and corporation, and so bounceable as you can neither hold him nor bind him."

"And who is this wonderful man, Janet ?"

"Aye, he is a wonderful man. I don't see why he should not be called a wonderful man. He's building a fine house beside old Dandy Baker's, and rare goings-on they have up there. I expect to hear o' bloodshed soon, and we may all be burned in our beds for anything I know, and all through building a comfortable house on land as he's bought and paid for, and a kinder man I never set eyes upon. He gave master two sovereigns for himself the very first time he ever came to chapel ; and only last night, when Mr. Paterson told him we was expecting a visitor to-day, which is you yourself, sir, he sent in as tender-looking a chicken and as nice a bit

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of cheek-bacon as ever I had through my fingers, and the man you saw going away from the door as you came up the street had just been sent by that same gentleman with a bushel of potatoes. We're in luck."

"Splendid, Janet, splendid. Mr. Paterson has another friend living in this very town whose name you've not mentioned yet."

"Not that I know of," said Janet.

"Shall I name that friend myself, Janet?"

"Aye, if you can."

"Her name is a short one, a cool one, a pat one; it is Janet Snow."

Janet laughed a little. "Aye, aye, sir, maybe; I won't deny it, and me been wi' him twenty years come Midsummer, and me nursed her in her last illness and promised her never to leave him, and kissed her bonny brow when it was colder than ice, and" (Janet was stopped by tears) "promised her to take care of the baby, and held the baby to her to be kissed when she couldn't move a finger. O my God! but it makes my heart sore to think on't."

And mine was sore, too. The world is

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full of heart-break, and it seems as if some of the heart-break might have been spared. Why did the young wife die? Her baby would have been heaven enough for her for many a year; why was she not permitted to enjoy it in her own sweet and simple fashion? The great heaven beyond the stars might have done without her, for it is full of angels; her little home-world could ill spare her, and she longed to stay. Who would have been harmed by her staying? Who begrudged her room? Who was the worse for the mouthful of bread she ate? But these questions are naked swords, and we cannot wisely handle them.

"That's where it is, you see, sir," Janet presently resumed, "as I feel it so much, and as I speak agin' the deekings; they might have put up a bit of a headstone for the poor young thing, and never missed the money, and not have left him to pinch himself to pay off the five pound a bit at a time, and nothing on the stone but plain letters as a child going to school might read; and other stones in the churchyard have drawings on them, and figures and

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birds, and ours has nothing." (Janet paused.) "And master used to be very fond of drawing on paper what he would like to have cut out on the stone, and he asked me which I liked best, and we found we could not afford it, and the deekings never lent a helping hand—

"And then" (resuming) "our little baby was taken from us—died in my lap —used to call me Ja-Ja, and creep about after me like a little angel. And oh! the house has never been the same since, nor has the minister; and I did think they might have carved just one little angel on the stone. So we opened the grave again and laid baby on her heart; and I do think the opening of that grave that day and standin' over it made master ten years older all in a moment like. Poor soul, he groaned when he looked in, and the tears rained out of his eyes when he heard the little coffin touch the big one. And as for me, I was no more use than a crazy thing—"

Unconscious Janet, how little she knew that she was ripping open my own heart. I, too, have an eternal vision. Amid all

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the whirl and dizziness of life's tragedy, in which creation seems to be but one great cloud, I find myself suddenly brought to a sweet baby's grave. A grey old church, a gurgling stream, a far-spreading thorn tree on a green hillock, and a grave on the sunny southerly side. That is it. Thither I hasten night and day, and in patting the soft grass I feel as if conveying some sense of love to the little sleeper far down. Do not reason with me about it; let the wild heart, in sweet delirium of love, have all its own way. Baby was but two years old when, like a dewdrop, he went up to the warm sun, yet he left my heart as I have seen ground left out of which a storm had torn a great tree. We talk about the influence of great thinkers, great speakers, and great writers, but what about the little infant's power? O child of my heart! no poet has been so poetical, no soldier so victorious, no benefactor so kind, as thy tiny unconscious self. I feel thy soft kiss on my withered lips just now, and would give all I have for one look of thy dreamy eyes. But I cannot have it. Yet God is love. Not dark doubt, not staggering argument, not subtle sophism,

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but child-death, especially where there is but one, makes me wonder and makes me cry in pain. Baby ! baby ! I could begin the world again without a loaf or a friend if I had but thee ; such a beginning, with all its hardship, would be welcome misery. I do not wonder that the grass is green and soft that covers that little grave, and that the summer birds sing their tenderest notes as they sit on the branches of that old hawthorn tree. My God ! Father of mine, in the blue heavens, is not this the heaviest cross that can crush the weakness of man ? Yet that green grave, not three feet long, is to me a great estate, making me rich with wealth untold. I can pray there. There I meet the infant-angels ; there I see all the mothers whose spirits are above ; and there my heart says strange things in strange words,—Baby, I am coming, coming soon ! Do you know me ? Do you see me ? Do you look from sunny places down to this cold land of weariness ? O baby, sweet, sweet baby, I will try for your sake to be a better man ; I will be kind to other little babies, and tell them your name, and sometimes let them play with your toys ; but oh,

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baby, baby, baby, my old heart sobs and breaks !

Poor Paterson ! I never understood that part of his story before, though he and I have talked his life over again and again. But an outsider is always necessary to fill in the detail. Even Paterson did not know all that Janet knew, nor had he felt the neglect of the deacons as a woman only could feel it. Poverty, indifference, unappreciated labour, bereavement, agony that cannot be spoken, these are the dumb consonants ; we must wait—Lord, how long ?—for the insertion of the music-making vowels.

Janet Snow was seldom without a casual opportunity of relieving her mind respecting the treatment which Mr. Paterson endured at the hands of his congregation ; but it was when William Jacobs called upon her that she most eagerly took advantage of her privileges. William Jacobs presented a very strong temptation to the tongue of an exasperated woman, being a beaming brother with a double

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chin, expressive of a degree of complacency and satisfaction wholly incompatible with the common terms of human existence, and suggestive of a style of life altogether unknown to her reverend but much-enduring pastor and master. William Jacobs was too stout and sleek to be able to lay any credible claim to the practice of self-denial, but those who knew him best were ready to assert that Jacobs was neither a glutton nor a sluggard, but was naturally so conditioned that he could have grown fat even upon the manna which was rained in the wilderness. Be this as it may, William Jacobs, underforeman in a flourishing brewery, was genial in spirit, domestic in habit, and not disinclined to the society of Janet Snow. The only thing known against Jacobs was a certain flippancy of manner, which cost him his place in the chapel choir. As a member of that respectable but disputatious body, William played a fiddle, along with two other scrapers on that expressive instrument. On one occasion Mr. Paterson gave out a hymn beginning, "And are we yet alive?" whereupon Jacobs whispered, "Pass the rosin, Jack, and we'll let him



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know who's alive." That remark, known by its author to be inconsistent with decorum and a good conscience, cost William his position in the choir, and doomed him to the obscurity of a mere seatholder. This was certainly a trifle mortifying, as William loved just a little publicity, and never concealed his opinion that chapel music was good in proportion as it provided for special action upon the fiddle.

"Not as I want the fiddle to do everything," he would benignly say; "at the same time, where would the choir be without one?" a remark which offended the leading tenor, who, through his partiality for the young lady who presided at the harmonium, had acquired undue and ill-regulated influence in the musical department of Mixford Chapel.

William Jacobs had for one evil moment thought of offering his services to another meeting, whose orthodoxy was not altogether indisputable, but his good nature prevailed, and consequently he remained faithful to the chapel where he had fiddled so long and so loudly. This

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faithfulness might in some subtle way be traceable to the influence of Janet Snow, but it is unreasonable to impair its integrity by going in quest of second causes and grovelling explanations. One thing is certain amid all speculation and mutability, and that one thing is the settled detestation felt by Janet Snow in the case of a church which did not respond to the merits of Mr. Paterson.

"And how is the minister to-night?" said William, drawing his chair to the kitchen fire; "you know, Janet, I am not one of those who doesn't swear by parson."

"Then why don't you do more for him?" said Janet; "what's the use of blowing the bellows into an empty grate?"

"That's a good 'un," William remarked, "but I didn't know as parson was a grate."

"And many other things you don't know," Janet quickly retorted; "likely you don't know that parson, as you call him, brought in a wandering kind o' preaching body to share his ha'penny herring last night and the last spoonful o' coffee I had in the house. You may not know it, but

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I know who does know it." Janet shut the window with a bang, and placed a candlestick on the table.

"Is the minister at home to-night, Janet?"

"No, he's not."

"Is he off again to have another go at the bishops? Eh, Janet, but parson does hate bishops."

"Parson hates nobody," said Janet.

"I tell you what, Janet," said William, softly, "I often wish parson would treat himself to a drop o' beer. Now there I could do something for him, even if it was only out o' my own allowance. Now, what's your private opinion, Janet, of a pint o' beer nicely heated and a sprinkling o' nutmeg, and, if you like, just a thin wedge of cheese, I don't mind how thin?"

"There wouldn't be much left of it," said Janet, "if you got the first chance."

Jacobs laughed. He liked to be where Janet was, and to laugh at her sharp sayings, even though they cut himself. Do we not all prefer the frowns of some women to the smiles of others? Jacobs found summer where other men would

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have bitterly complained of winter, so let him enjoy himself according to his own quality and fashion, knowing that his double chin will suffer no serious loss.

"Eh, Janet, but you've got lips like a pair of scissors, but I know ye mean no harm. Now there's another thing, Janet, I want your opinion upon, and that is a nice little bit o' Welsh rabbit, with just a thought of white vinegar and a turn or two o' buttered toast. Now what say ye?" Jacobs beamed, and sidled up to Janet, and expected "confirmation strong."

"Away with you and your suppers," said Janet; "you are a guzzling good-for-nothing; if you only had pudding enough for yourself, not a button would you care if the minister had nothing to eat but your story of how you enjoyed yourself. You seem to think that when you have mentioned a supper you have given one. If you would do more and talk less, you wouldn't be so like those people who are keen enough to tell you it's raining, but not half so keen to lend you an umbrella. I don't like donkeys that can do nothing but bray."

"Janet, Janet," said William, "come

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now, come now. You don't see no ill-will i' my face, I reckon. And that's because I ha' none, Janet. To prove my words, I tell you what we'll do. I'll just nip out and fetch in half-a-pound o' cheese, two pints of ale, a quartern loaf, and a three-cornered bit o' butter, and we'll warm the kitchen up a bit. Eh, Janet? Come, let's be what I call human."

"This kitchen's not going to be made into a public, I can tell you," said Janet. "So you know. Why don't you fiddle in chapel now?"

"Eh, Janet, there you step on all my toes at once. It was all nothing but the rosin and that sour old tenor, Chettle; he might ha' known I was but gaming, and was only going to make the fiddle do its best. Parson says, 'And are we yet alive,' and I says, 'What a question to ask!' says I. 'Why, in course,' says I, 'we are alive, or how could we be sitting in Mixford Chapel?' It were all old Chettle, Janet, but no ill-will do I bear him." Jacobs was silent awhile, and added, "I have the fiddle i' my topcoat inside pocket, Janet, so if you would like to hear it, you can without paying much."

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Janet said no fiddle had ever been played in that kitchen, and if she knew night from day, no fiddle ever should be played in it. But if Jacobs was so anxious to do something, she wished he would do something useful by "telling that chubby-faced Robinson, the painter and glazier, to put a new pane into the study window, for the minister was very like to die of influenza because of the horrid draught, and him sitting there without a fire when the cold was like to bite your nose off." Jacobs said that, in his private opinion, Robinson, though not a bad painter, had no more real religion than a shoe-sole, and asked Janet if he was not about right in saying so.

"Shoe-sole!" said Janet, with blighting contempt, but with deeply-hidden meaning.

"That's how I put it," said Jacobs, "and if a man's got no more religion than a shoe-sole, he may paint his head off if he likes, but when he comes to be added up and settled down he'll be blue enough," a sentiment which Janet endorsed without clearly comprehending.

"And where will you find any real religion in Mixford Chapel?" she added."

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"Now, Janet, I don't hold wi' that altogether," Jacobs replied; "I'm bound to say that there's a sprinkling on't in Mixford Chapel. Take such people as the Maxwells and Ryders, and there's even old Neddy the baker; what say ye to him; and that old Butterworth, ye know, Janet?"

"Ay," said Janet, "he's dead and gone, and I'm not going to say a word agin him, nor agin old Neddy, for I've a spice loaf i' the cupboard now he sent in last night, but as for the rest on 'em, I wouldn't give a penny a quart for the soup they would boil down to, stingy, pecky, dressy creatures. So you know my mind."

"Well, Janet, you're partly right and partly wrong, I reckon. Fair's fair, you know. Mind you, I believe some o' the folks are downright good, and they do a lot o' good, too; so we better not make out that they are all like Robinson. Mrs. Ryder does a lot o' good. So does Mrs. Maxwell. And so does Mr. Wilson, the ironmonger. They all said they were uncommon sorry when I left the singing pew, and old Mrs. Simpson says she misses the fiddle awfully when they sing

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the tune of *Tynedale*, where the chorus comes in after every verse."

But Janet was implacable. She had but one standard of judgment. Whoever treated the minister well was sure of heaven, and whoever failed in this point disobeyed and dishonoured the whole law. It was not a broad view: it was a view for which the merit of magnanimity could be justly claimed: it was, indeed, a view which might be charged with some measure of partiality and incompleteness; yet my heart warms towards the faithful creature, and my imagination creates for her a heaven worthy of her simple and pure love.

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## CHAPTER II.

You will remind me that all dissenters are not Arthur Patersons. No doubt that is the case. Archbishop Tait had a standing joke, which he periodically retailed at the Mansion House, respecting a Nonconformist deacon who was a grocer, and who as a grocer played the tyrant over the humble dissenting minister. Of course there is no such grocer, but the joke is as good without him as it would be with him. But if there were twenty such grocers in every church, what has that to do with the religious conception upon which Nonconformity proceeds? Why ride off upon a detail instead of grappling seriously and strenuously with a profound spiritual principle? Dissenters do not deny that a church which is regulated by an Act of Uniformity offers less temptation to individuality or eccentricity than is offered by an ecclesiasticism under whose easier

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conditions every man is supposed to do that which is right in his own eyes. The temptation may be less in one direction and greater in another, for I hold official uniformity to be nothing less than a humiliating temptation to suppress individual conviction, and to quench the personality without which manhood itself is pithless and practically irresponsible.

I am quite prepared to shew you something of the inside of dissenting life, by introducing you to a few characters which you will naturally regard as droll, or eccentric, or even ridiculous. You are quite right in thinking that we are not all Arthur Patersons. Perhaps all Churchmen are not Father Damiens, or Archbishop Taits. We must make room for differences; we must even make room for innocent oddities.

The type of hearer which often fretted me in the early days of my ministry was represented by Nehemiah Battison, always spoken of with forbearance or affection as "old Mr. Battison," a man who, in some pious nightmare, had conceived the wild idea of popular and unsectarian evangelisation through the open and comparatively

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inexpensive medium of street names. He thought that a Society might be founded to carry out his idea on a considerable scale. According to old Mr. Battison's opinion that Society could not fail to prosper, combining as it did the use of municipal money with the adaptation of unobtrusive personal sentiment. Mr. Battison, I am bound to say, like every other zealous apostle, was always prepared to unfold and explain his peaceful scheme.

"How sweet it is to think," said he, "of 'Sabbath Street,' 'Gospel Circus,' 'Disciple Square,' and 'Jerusalem Arcade.' The very names are short discourses, and the very mention of them might do incalculable good to some careless minds."

"You have thought the matter well over, Mr. Battison," I would say.

"Oh, yes, sir; I have given my best attention to it. I have also desired often that you might, in the order of Providence, be led to mention the matter in the pulpit (without, of course, in any way alluding to me) and I specially desired this about six weeks ago when his Worship

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the Mayor was present at the evening service; I thought, "Now, if our dear pastor would put——'"

Though Mr. Battison said this with an air of self-oppressive humility, I knew that he would have given fifty pounds if his name could have been publicly mentioned on any subject in the world in the hearing of the mayor of Midtown—in no spirit of boasting, in no ambitious or unseemly tone, as if he belonged to the ancient family of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, persons of abiding but melancholy fame; the self-obliterating old gentleman was only anxious to indicate that he was in no degree unduly exalted by the revelation which had been discriminately withheld from many other persons in his native town.

There were people in the congregation who openly ridiculed Mr. Battison's novel idea of doing good: one man went indeed so far as to offer the counter-suggestion that streets and squares ought to be named "not scripturally but scientifically," as, for example, "Evolution Lane," "Quadratic

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Flats," "Cosmos Crescent," and "Ellipsis Oval," a course which was severely condemned by most of Mr. Battison's daughters whose ripe juvenility he consistently maintained by tenderly describing them as "the girls." One of the "girls," Jochebed by name, often referred to this miserable counter-suggestion under emotion so profound and uncontrollable as to make her blind to the precipices over which her animated incoherence stumbled into sudden ruin. As a minister I have, in one sense, to please all sorts of people, and bind them to my ministry with some degree of appreciation and confidence. I am not about to make any special claim on behalf of dissenting human nature. Dissenters have many characteristics in common with the ecclesiastical multitude. Many people only come to chapel so long as they can in some way be entertained or gratified, unless they come to keep up an established custom or to vary the depressing monotony of home. Some people are comically peculiar. In my congregation there is a butcher who will never stand up to sing if I announce a hymn in any but long, short, or common metre; a hymn bearing the

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mystic numbers 4 4 7,8 7, or 11.10,11.6, always excites not only his suspicion but his intense aversion: there is Peppers the shoemaker, who calls his corner shop "the hospital for worn-out understandings," who looks upon my acquirements with disdain because I am so poor a hand at the interpretation of "the man of sin," or "the little horn in Daniel:" there is Wilson the coal-merchant, who begs me in the name of pity to avoid all hair-splitting subjects, because he has worry enough in his own business,—particularly since another coal-merchant has set up in the town and taken a large pew in the parish church: there is Errick the schoolmaster, who thinks no sermon worth listening to that does not bristle with historical references: there is the busy mother with seven children, who hates all argument, and who prefers comfort to dogma: there is Thomson the chemist and druggist, who thinks of "giving up all religion" because Ruth the beautiful Moabitess was for reasons totally inscrutable on the religious side made an exception to the law which forbade a Moabite to enter the congregation of the Lord to the tenth gener-

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ation for ever. Thomson has reasons for thinking, greatly to his wife's aggravation, that Ruth ought not to have been brought into the stock of Israel, whereas Mrs. Thomson, who has no particular liking for what she calls "bamboozling subjects," contemptuously bids her husband keep to his pestle and mortar and let beautiful Moabitesses "or whatever you call them" mind their own business and keep in their own country. It is only due to Mr. Thomson to say that his wife is not a woman of capacious mind, and that she has a very strong prejudice against any person who was born far from the town she lives in. The case of this chemist and druggist is most peculiar, and is, indeed, very irritating, because he has such shooting and darting pains in the head that contradiction might put his valuable life in peril, and expose his wife and ten children, four of them bald-headed babes, to early destitution. This is what Mrs. Thomson feels, too, for she has often assured me that if his head were stronger she would "Ruth" him, which remark, judging by its tone, I regard as a delicate threat. I sympathise with Mrs. Thomson, because the chemist

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puts me to a humiliating disadvantage when he looks at me from behind a jar of carbonate of soda, and impudently says: "Come, no dodging, if you please, — no parson's tricks for me." Under such provocation my impulse also is to "Ruth" him, and pound him in his own mortar; but then think of the family!

It must never be forgotten that all these people have, in some way or other, their good points: the butcher sends me kidneys and sweetbread (a double portion when all the tunes are short metre): the coal-merchant insists upon giving me a ten-pound note under the strictest seal of confidence when I go out for my annual holiday, and advises me not to wear my mind out with things that nobody cares for, "whatever they may say to the contrary:" the old schoolmaster may muddle himself about historical references, but he also instructs three scholars whose poor struggling parents cannot pay him a penny: my deacons toil for the church with devoted industry without fee or reward; and often the infatuated Thomson



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knows when I need a tonic, and generously sends me one free of charge. All this must be set down on the other side in any fair estimate of my public position. It is clearly my duty to take an intensely religious view of the whole case, and to seek the healing of any little frets and bruises, not in the code of a club, or in the etiquette of a fashionable society, or in the compensations of a well-paid office, but in the redeeming thought which heals the universe and for ever seeks to comfort and bless the heart of sorrow.

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## CHAPTER III.

THERE is another man to whom I must introduce you—the Rev. William Whiteman, who is threatened with total loss of sight; and the introduction takes place at a critical moment in the career of that eminent Baptist minister,—such a moment as often reveals character.

Whiteman has had trouble in his church, and has borne it like a Christian hero. There is no merrier laugh in the town than Whiteman's, yet who can pray with so trembling a reverence, or sympathise with human distress more tenderly? His caressing tone is itself a kind of gospel. And those eyes, so large, so glowing, threatened with blindness! I sometimes wish my chemist, Mr. Thomson, belonged to his church, for I think he could almost laugh him out of that ridiculous notion about the Moabitess. But Whiteman has been stung by a much inferior person, and

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has suffered more from a gnat than he is ever likely to suffer from a lion.

Mr. Titus Noxey had a front pew in the gallery of the Baptist chapel, and accounted himself a person of some consequence in the town, on various grounds, but principally from the fact that in addition to being a newsagent and tobacconist, the post-office of Midtown was under his charge. Mr. Noxey was constitutionally social. Mr. Noxey saw all sorts of people, sold stamps to all sorts of people, and was never known to be unwilling to talk to all sorts of people. Mr. Noxey never had occasion to go out of his own house to see anybody. The whole world of Midtown passed through Mr. Noxey's well-situated shop. The Vicar went to Noxey's for stamps, so did the Curate, so did the Catholic priest (a man with the sweetest smile I ever saw), so did the retired Quaker banker; besides these notable persons in the town, there were other notable persons from the surrounding district, for Midtown was belted with the loveliest stone-built villages in all green England, a dozen of them at least being within

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walking distance, and some so near to one another that the church bells blended in the dales and made Sunday doubly musical. When the genial Vicar of Midtown called at Noxey's for stamps and envelopes, he occasionally bought, as if for a friend, and quite in a casual way, a couple of ounces of golden shag. All this could not but have a subtle effect upon a man so observant and talkative as Mr. Noxey. He could truly say that he had seen a great many people, and that his public position brought under his notice a good many things which he was bound to treat with confidence; in this respect, indeed, Mr. Noxey was himself a kind of living post-office, written all over with V.R., and gummed and marked like a registered letter. Mr. Noxey always spoke for quite a crowd of people: his opinions seemed to be attested by a great cloud of witnesses, and to have a parliamentary representativeness and value in his own estimation. Mr. Whiteman was bound to call upon this important member of his baptised flock, or this important member would give up his two sittings, for which he paid two shillings a quarter each, and go at once to

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the Congregationalists, or the Episcopalians, or even the Catholics, for when his pride was touched, his sectarian preferences went for nothing. Besides all this, one Baptist minister, whose failing eyesight made him dependent on others, was a poor figure in the great public ever crowding and surging around Mr. Noxey's popular counter: when a man sells shag to a vicar, cigars to a squire, newspapers to a landlord, memorandum books to an auctioneer, and valentines to all the housemaids of a parish, a Baptist minister, in the irregular receipt of eighty pounds a year, cannot expect to be much accounted of. Mr. Noxey saw so many people that they naturally fell into perspective, and finely graduated to a vanishing point.

"You know, sir," said he to Mr. Whiteman, "in my important position I cannot help hearing these things: mine is a sort of public position, in consequence of the office being here. That is just what Mrs. Liddell said"—here a customer bought half-an-ounce of tobacco, looked at Mr. Whiteman, and went out—"and I felt very sorry to hear it; at the same time"

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—readjusting a pile of railway time-tables, and ordering out a butcher's dog—"at the same time, there may be some truth in what she says"—here a customer ordered two post cards, and laid down half-a-sovereign; Noxey's daughter Jane was called to get the change out of the office till, during which time the customer grinned in a civil way at Mr. Whiteman —"for her part she says she wants more exhorting in your sermons, in particular of an evening, when the gallery is pretty full" ("Plague on that dog! Johnny, dear, do banish that prowling beast)," "and when, as one may say, it might be well to draw a bow at a venture." Here the postman came in for the mid-day mail, and whistled in a suppressed way close to Mr. Whiteman, for whom he had but small respect, seeing that he himself was the second tenor in the parish choir, and looked upon Baptists with more curiosity than favour. Mr. Whiteman, patient and gracious soul, a very child-man, yet with a mind large and keen, could stand this humiliating process no longer, so he turned away sick at heart, wounded and discouraged.

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Well for Whiteman that on his way home he met his senior deacon, Mr. Robson, a heavy-made deacon, always genial, always hopeful.

"Why do you go near the wretch?" said Mr. Robson, noticing his pastor's dejection, and noticing an expressive application of his hands to his eyes.

"Why, indeed?" replied Whiteman. "I stood in that rag shop of his, and saw people coming in for tobacco and stamps and papers, and in came a great colley dog from the butcher's, next door, and that great hulking lad that he calls 'Johnny dear' was called in—and there I stood like a criminal——"

"Never mind," said the best of deacons, "come up to Eastfield and dine with us, and look at things from a sensible point of view, and the whole thing will be forgotten."

So it was settled. Eastfield looked well even on that February day, when the wind was blowing steadily from the north-east, and a thin mist was lingering among the branches of the old cedars and winter oaks. Eastfield was a home. There was

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a fire in every room, but the cheeriest of all the grates was in Mr. Robson's well-stored library, a library in which such Puritans as Kingsley, Thackeray, Dickens, and George Eliot stood in near relation to such romantic thinkers as Sibbes and Charnock, Charles Simeon and Andrew Fuller. On the tops of the book-cases were busts of eminent statesmen and famous authors, and on the walls here and there, where the pressure of the books allowed, engravings of Shakespeare and Milton, with smaller portraits of George Whitefield and Robert Hall. Mr. Robson was a retired banker, with plenty of money, varied intelligence, and a heart big enough to pity and forgive even the tobacconist and postmaster. "What bothers me as much as anything," said Whiteman, sitting in the softest of red morocco chairs, "is that when the vicar—Heaven be good to him, for he is a jolly soul—goes into the shop he says, 'Well, Noxey, how wags the world?' but I have to say, 'Good morning, Mr. Noxey; how is Mrs. Noxey? how are all your children? I want——"

"Well, well," said Mr. Robson, cutting off the sentence lest it should end badly,

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"what we have to do at this moment is to forget the past and enjoy a long afternoon at Eastfield."

Could Mr. Robson and Mr. Whiteman have heard the conversation which two masons, heightening the stable wall, were holding, they would have heard one of them say :—

"You should hear Whiteman, Tom; he's the sort o' parson to make ye think a bit, though his eyesight is going."

"I am not a parson's man," said Tom; "shouldn't care a bobbin if they was all in the river."

"Hear Whiteman, Tom, and if he doesn't puzzle that head o' thine, I'll give thee all the steam thee can carry away from any boiler i' the world."

Tom chopped off the end of a brick and fixed it in the wall.

The four o'clock dinner is over, and pastor and deacon are in the library once more.

"Now take the other view of your position," said Mr. Robson. "Your preaching was never richer, your people never saw

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the finest shades of your thought so clearly, and never did I hear so many quotations from your sermons as at the present time. The wonder to me is that Noxey cares to listen to such preaching, and, on the other hand, there must be something good about Noxey, or he could not so constantly attend your ministry. Why don't you take that view of the case? Why don't you say: 'Noxey was there again this morning; my subject was full of unusual and even bold suggestion—suggestion which some of the fathers'" (nodding towards Fuller and Hall), "'would certainly have viewed with anxiety—yet there he sat, and when the the last hymn was sung, Noxey's was the loudest voice of all?' That would be philosophy. You preach philosophy: why don't you practise it?"

Whiteman smiled. "A very good view," said he, "but would you have kept Noxey in your bank one week?"

"Certainly not. But a bank is not a church. If a church is a mere place of business—or at the best a kind of pleasure garden or recreation ground—that is one thing, and that would justify a kind of

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narrow reasoning; but if a church is a school, a place of education and discipline, an institution in which the best view is to be taken of men in order to their ultimate rescue from all evil, that is another thing, and an infinitely larger reasoning is rendered necessary. The more patient you are with Noxey the more is Christ working in you."

Whiteman always responded to a noble appeal, noble in reason as well as noble in feeling. At this moment he longed to see Noxey, and his daughter Jane, and "Johnny dear," and the butcher's dog, and all the panorama of papers, stamps, post-cards, whistling postman, and casual customers. How base he had been in the morning, yes, that very February morning. He ought to have loved Noxey, to have blessed Noxey, to have lent money to Noxey, to have—; and so the endless possibility wound itself around his imagination, until Noxey became the saint and he the sinner, and the uppermost thought of his mind was to make amends to Noxey. Besides, Mr. Robson had used the name which thrilled the pastor's heart more and

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more as the mystery of life disclosed its vastness and solemnity, and more and more as he realised the possibility—more than possibility—of gradually losing his sight. Literally, in the case of Mr. Whiteman, to live was Christ. That name was in very deed above every name, and the story of which it is the eternal centre was the sum and crown of all wisdom. Without one touch of soft sentimentalism, he held it to be the manliest of all strength, and the very sublimity of reason, to respond to its pathos with the tears and sobs of a child's stricken heart. No hireling was Whiteman—not even for the tempting sum of eighty pounds a year—but a true shepherd of the flock of Christ, with one aim, one trust, one hope.

The February light is dying. A star or two, the keener in glance because of the sharp north-easter, may already be seen in the deep blue sky. Presently the moon, clear-cut and gleaming in silvery splendour, appears like a mother amongst the stars. Mr. Whiteman is coming down the gravel path with Mr. Robson; at the gate they can stand but a moment because

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of the cold, so with a warm grip of the hand they say good-night, and separate. Away out in the night, Mr. Whiteman enjoys the holy scene. All the stars speak to him. The moon speaks of patience and modesty and sweet content; the great arch, so deeply blue, bids him always take the lofty and noble view; the stars, in their infinite variety of size and brightness, tell him that he too has his place in his Father's house. A night like this is a night to walk in. Why not go up the Acomb road, cross the Abbey Fields, come down Golden Lane, and thus, through a two-mile walk, keep up communion with the consenting stars? He would do so. On the white stile of the Abbey Fields he even sat a while that he might look the more steadily into the eyes of heaven. How grand! How solemn! Aloud he said, "This is none other than the house of God!" It seemed as if for the moment he had recovered the full use of his eyes, so much did he see of the infinite temple of Night.

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## CHAPTER IV.

We have an excellent ministerial club, as Midtown is belted with thriving little towns and villages. Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists all belong to it, consequently the club represents no small variety of talent and disposition. At the last meeting we all seemed to be out of spirits, and, as the host of the day, I asked how it was that we were all so dull and silent, whereupon Williams said—

"Paterson will make himself ridiculous presently; then we shall all thaw. Meanwhile, beloved, I simply light a pipe and wait confidently."

"So would I if I had any tobacco," said Nicholson. Nicholson never had any tobacco. Nicholson dined from home four days a week. Nicholson was no preacher, but in his visiting capacity he was supreme.

"Here's tobacco for you," said Paterson,

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Paterson was poor but generous. Paterson had no humour. He lived, as we have seen, to disestablish and disendow the Church. Paterson was an acting Dissenter; his prayers had a political tone, and his hopes of heaven owed not a little to the certainty that the Act of Uniformity would be done away with.

"But what makes you so dull, Paterson? Not been lecturing lately?"

"Noxey is accountable for my stupidity," said Paterson.

"What on earth have you to do with Noxey?"

"I went in for an ounce of shag, and on turning round rather suddenly to come out I fell over a great brute of a dog—a monstrous colley—and I have not recovered yet."

"What happened then?" said we all.

"A good deal happened. Old Noxey called his hopeful son and daughter, and they set a dish of cold water behind a pile of waste paper, and after I had cooled my face and recovered my tone a little, he ventured in a carefully Christian manner—the old hypocrite Noxey, I mean—to give me a bit of his mind about you,

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Whiteman, and your lovely ways, and I went at him so—"

"That was wrong," said Whiteman; "the worse the man, the better the minister, is my motto." Then aside—"Very aggravating, though, whatever Mr. Robson may say."

"Hang it all," said Williams, in the bosom of fraternal confidence, and in the innocent licence of Monday, "the fact is Congregationalism in every form is a failure."

"Ho! ho!" Paterson responded; "I thought I was the man who had to make himself ridiculous!"

"Nothing ridiculous about it," Williams continued. "We have about two thousand ministers in Independency, and if the Government called upon me to make out a schedule, this would be my return: Half of them wish they had never entered it; eight hundred of them want to make a change of sphere; and the rest of them are tolerably contented, because of good congregations, good salaries, and opportunities for doing real good. I am not an evil speaker; don't imagine it. Some of our fellows are as good as gold, many of



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them in fact ; but democracy in churches is a failure."

Tomlinson agreed. Tomlinson was a short, fat man, wearing spectacles, and looking when seated as if he had swallowed his legs. Tomlinson was not wanted by the churches. He was a heavy preacher, severe upon all successful men, fond of good eating, and proud of having been five years at college. Tomlinson despised the taste of deacons, and sneered at the intellect of the churches. Tomlinson carried about a tremendous grievance, and looked it.

"I tell you what it is, brethren," said he, "if a place is not found for me soon, I shall do something that will surprise the denomination. I will." And then he closed his lips like a resolute man.

Now, the only way in which Tomlinson could have surprised any one who knew him would have been by the display of a little common - sense. Such a display would positively have paralysed his most intimate acquaintances.

"What will you do ?" Paterson in-

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quired, lighting his pipe to hide the smile of contempt.

"Do? Why, I will jack up the whole business, and seek ordination in the Church." Here one of the swallowed legs protruded a little, and brought a thick-soled boot into full view. Tomlinson fell back in the chair, fixed his gooseberry eyes upon his brethren, and asked me whether he could be favoured with a drink of water.

"My dear friend," said Paterson, in a well-feigned tone, "hear me—don't."

"But I will, I tell you," Tomlinson replied. "I will, once; I will, twice; I will, thrice. Why do you say, 'Don't'?"

"Because the Church cannot do with even one additional barrow-load of rubbish."

"Thanks for civility," said Tomlinson, with a jerk of the body which brought the other boot into view.

"No incivility, Tomlinson, I assure you—"

"I differ," said the little man hotly.

"Pardon me; no incivility at all. I must say I detest your reasoning: if a place can be found, you will be a Dissen-

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ter ; if a place cannot be found, you will be a Churchman. Bah ! Where's the conscience ? Where's the reason ? Where's the courage ? "

" To change the subject—" said I.

" But I will not change it," said Tomlinson. " I am insulted."

" Come, come," said the brethren, " after all, the laws of hospitality must be observed. Our host wishes to change the subject, and we are bound to comply."

Tomlinson's boots were withdrawn once more by a sudden jerk of the body, and his face assumed an expression of vindictive acquiescence. Even if the scene had not passed away upon my suggestion, it would have been ended by the entrance of Professor Stokoe, the only absent member of the club. Dr. Stokoe had long retired from the active service which, as Professor of Natural Science in a northern college, he had ably discharged for many years. The Professor was universally beloved. Whilst his talents and acquirements entitled him to the highest position as a teacher, his modesty, his simplicity, and

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his grand integrity gave him a supreme place in the heart of every man who knew him. When the Professor had any news to communicate he told it all before he took off his hat and gloves, and told it with a kind of infantine and impetuous gurgle, as if at last he was able to do something for his friends. No matter what the company, no matter what the subject, the Professor must get the news off his mind, and then settle into a silence the more remarkable because of the eagerness of speech which preceded it. The Professor was the most silent public man I ever knew, unless he had some news to tell, and having news to tell, he simply put every other speaker down until he had told it. Walking behind the Professor, his friends could always shrewdly guess whether he had any news upon his mind. When he had charge of news his walk was brisk and urgent, as if a wager were to be won; when he had no news he looked steadily at the clouds and made calculations as to their density and their velocity, and put in danger the life of every child and kitten which he unconsciously passed on the road. It is, indeed,

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on record that on one occasion when he was considering how far the vapour of the Gulf Stream affected the rainfall in various parts of Great Britain and Ireland, he fell over a tiny barrow, and suddenly sat down in a gutter. That piece of news he was just as eager to tell as any other, adding, "Some little rascal, you know, must have forgotten, you see, that he had left the barrow there, you perceive." But the barrow would bring back the rain, and lead the sweet old man to assure his hearers that "rain is the most irregular of all meteorological phenomena." On the Monday morning in question the Professor had something to say. Standing just inside my study door, with one glove partly drawn off, he said:

"Have you heard the news?"

"What about?"

"About Jenkinson. The best news you ever listened to."

I may say that Jenkinson was a minister in a neighbouring town, "a fellow of infinite wit," the best of companions, but unhappily easily persuaded to take more wine than was good for him. Not that he was

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a drunkard, for he who is a drunkard drinks with his soul as well as with his lips, and Jenkinson never did that. A designing old pork butcher who attended his ministry, a man whose chief pleasure was in boasting how much champagne he had in his cellar, had apparently made up his mind to ruin Jenkinson through the medium of wine-drinking. The old pork butcher would boast that "the parson" sat up till midnight smoking and drinking, and that he had induced "the parson" to carry away an unfinished bottle of brown sherry, and had one night given a lad threepence "to see the parson safe home." Jenkinson was an old fellow-student of the Professor, and the Professor entertained a sincere affection for his gifted friend. The Professor had affectionately warned Jenkinson, saying, "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird," and Jenkinson had wept like a child, and asked the Professor to pray with him and for him. They knelt together in the Professor's study, and the Professor's tender and most womanly heart pleaded mightily with God. How far the prayer availed, the Professor must tell.

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"He has told me all about it himself. He has written it out just as it occurred. Brethren, let us be glad, and sing praises to a delivering God——"

"Let us hear the story first," said Williams, impatiently.

The Professor took out a letter, and read:—

"I called upon the designing man, and acted, so far as manner is concerned, without any change of feeling or purpose. 'Now what will you have, Mr. Jenkinson?' said he; 'all that is in my house is at your service.' 'Whatever you please,' said I. 'Well, it's a little too early for champagne; I call that," said he, 'an evening drink; but what do you say, my dear pastor, to a drop of real old brown?' I said, 'All right; but what do you mean by a drop?' The pork butcher laughed, and said, 'Ha, ha! that was a downright mean way of putting it; you know how welcome you are to everything you can eat and drink in my house.' I looked very seriously at the old rascal, and said, 'Make it two.' 'If you like,' he replied. 'Two be it,' said I, and two bottles of old brown sherry were produced. I then said that

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the thing would be incomplete without tobacco, whereupon he brought a jar containing most of a pound of shag. 'Enjoy yourself,' said he, and I replied, 'That's exactly what I mean to do.' Now came the crisis. I must say, Stokoe, that every bone in my body trembled, but I was not to be turned from my purpose, the purpose created by that prayer of yours, so full of tears. Looking at the wine, I said, 'My happiness would be increased if a third bottle could be produced.' The pork butcher replied, 'First make an end of the two.' 'May I do what I like with this wine?' 'Certainly,' he replied. 'Then I will.' I paused a moment: how long it seemed! 'There goes bottle one,' said I, dashing it into the dim fire, 'and there goes bottle two,' dashing it into the same place, 'and there goes the shag,' thrusting it into the grate. 'You meant to ruin me,' said I, 'but God has delivered me; your heart was filled with cruelty, but God's grace has abounded on my behalf, and now my soul is escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler.' That is the happy report, Stokoe: rejoice with me: a new day dawns, and a new song makes me glad."

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When the Professor ceased reading there were tears in his large grey eyes, and there were tears in his voice as he said—"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." After a moment's pause he continued—"We ought to give thanks to God for this: it is a miracle: brother Tomlinson, will you lead us?"

"No, sir, I will not," said Tomlinson. "I mean to jack up the whole business: I preach no more, pray no more, write no more, in connection with Congregationalism."

"My dear sir," said the Professor, "my my dear brother! the propriety of your remark I am totally at a loss to perceive; what has happened? have I said anything to grieve you? have I——"

"Not at all," said Tomlinson; "you are a gentleman as well as a minister: the two terms may be synonymous in theory, but they have no necessary connection in practice."

Paterson relieved the Professor's perplexity by explaining. Williams accompanied the explanation with "Paterson's

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right, too," and I endeavoured to encourage that view, as did Nicholson, as it amounted to a conversion on the part of a man who had just declared that Congregationalism is a failure.

"It is true," Paterson said, "that in the heat of the moment I used an expression which was strong, to say the least of it: that expression I wish to withdraw: at the same time, do not misunderstand me: the expression was rough, but it expressed a sound sentiment: I am utterly sick of the way in which some of our men conduct themselves, it is so wanting in every feature of moral dignity, and so calculated to bring our principles into contempt. No man must assume a Nonconformist attitude merely as a personal convenience, or as an expression of patronage. Some of our men seem to think that Nonconformity ought to be extremely obliged to them for espousing it. Nonconformity washed them, clothed them, sent them to college at its own expense, and put them into the ministry, and they no sooner put themselves into long coats and soft hats than they strut about as if they ought to have been vicars and deans——"

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The Professor cleared his throat as if about to speak, but Paterson rushed on——

"If they don't succeed, they blame the deacons, men who gratuitously devote all they are and have to the cause of Christ: if they don't feel comfortable, they charge their discomfort upon the deacons, and ask contemptuously what can be expected from butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers, as if Nonconformist ministers themselves did not come from the middle classes of the country."

Nicholson put himself into a speaking attitude in vain, for Paterson was not to be stopped.

"The fact is we had better accept the disagreeable conclusion that half-hearted men must either go from us, or be put away. They must be got rid of. It is better to be strong in quality, than to be showy in number. My distinct conviction is that the churches are a good deal too long-suffering, Tomlinson," Paterson continued with energy, "you had better go; we do not need such men as you are—if I must either affront you or conceal my convictions, I deliberately adopt the former

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course." Without saying one word, Tomlinson walked straight out of the house.

"The position," said the Professor, "is an awkward one. I came into the meeting late, so I feel myself placed at some disadvantage. What brother Paterson has said about Nonconformity entirely commends itself to my judgment. His remarks are very just. My father was a barber——"

Here we all applauded, not, of course, meaning to pay any invidious compliment to barbers, but to mark our sense of the Professor's dignity in not being ashamed to own an origin not distinctly aristocratic.

"But an honest man, well informed, and most devoted——"

Here we expressed our admiration in harmonious murmurs.

"Brother Tomlinson's father may have been——"

"A greengrocer," said Williams. "I know him well, a little bleary-eyed hunchback that would jaw at you by the hour if you cared to fool away your time."

The professor was stunned for a mo-

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ment, as he always was by the copious use of inexact terms. His was not a mind that could suddenly change its point of vision, or an imagination that could move otherwise than along a straight line. A habit of his was to follow up any remarks he had addressed to others by a few observations mutteringly addressed to himself, and in this habit he markedly indulged when excited by any subject. This morning he muttered much. Evidently the inward tumult was beyond control. He had rejoiced over the restoration of one brother, and now he was unexpectedly mourning the loss of another. A mind like the professor's easily falls into a moralising strain; he said something, more or less incoherently, but with genuine emotion, about "ups and downs," "chequered scenes," "lights and shadows," yet there remained the fact that as Jenkinson came in at one door, Tomlinson went out at the other.

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## CHAPTER V.

Soon after Tomlinson so "went out," he made his way to the well-known Mr. Daleham, the character of whose wily and self-respecting mind will be seen from his conversation. Mr. Tomlinson was carrying in his wounded heart a secret which powerfully affected his relation to dissent. That secret may have had something to do with a personal tone and manner often suspected of insincerity, and therefore it is at least dramatic justice to place all possible assets to a credit which had wantonly frittered away its own reputation. Mr. Daleham was tall, wiry, and obsequious. He could bow low without at all impairing his pride, and he could see as far round a corner as any man I ever knew. By persons who did not know him he was thought to have a winning manner. His smile was quite a feature. He was not at all averse to leading in prayer—

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with what happy consistency it will at once be seen.

"The fact is, Mr. Daleham," said the affronted Tomlinson, "I am in a good deal of trouble, and I want you to show me the way out of it if you can, and if you can, I know you will."

"Make your mind perfectly certain upon that point, Mr. Tomlinson. What I can do is as good as already done. Let us walk."

The two men went rapidly along Golden Lane, and, having got into the Abbey Fields, they fell into a leisurely pace.

"I want to leave the Dissenters and to enter the Established Church, but there is a serious obstacle in the road."

"Confidentially, what may that be, Mr. Tomlinson?"

"I will tell you. I began life as a very Paterson of a Dissenter."

"I remember."

"Very good. That is fact number one. That fact got me into the good graces of old Miss Beebee, of the Green Hollows ——"

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"The richest old lady in the parish."

"One of the richest, certainly, Mr. Daleham, and a most bigoted Nonconformist. The Church of England is her pet aversion. She would never listen to a preacher who wore a pulpit robe, or go to a chapel where there was an organ; in short, she hated the Establishment with a perfectly irrational animosity."

"Well?"

"Miss Beebee, taking a fancy to me as a Dissenter" (here Mr. Daleham playfully threw a stone at a robin) "of her own type, and not having a relation in the whole world, has made her will in my favour, and the property amounts to not less than five-and-twenty thousand pounds" (Mr. Daleham put his arm through Mr. Tomlinson's, and said, "Speak softly; we can never tell who's behind the hedges)." "Well, the old lady must never know that I have any leaning towards the Church, or she would change the will in a moment, and cut me off absolutely——"

"Confidentially, Mr. Tomlinson, who has possession of the will?"

"The will is in my own possession, Mr. Daleham, so that in the event of Miss



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Beebee's decease, I simply go in and administer——"

"And her present health?"

"Her present health is good, but her age as you know is advanced."

"You think, in short, that she may drop off any moment?"

"Exactly. Or she may linger a year or two. Now here is my position. The property is left to me by a Dissenter, and because I am a Dissenter, and if I cease to be a Dissenter, the property will be forfeited, yet all my leanings are towards the Church; the vulgarity of deacons I can no longer stand, and, Mr. Daleham, pardon me, the ministers are even vulgarer than the deacons."

"But, Mr. Tomlinson, what can you expect from such a gang? Can the Ethiopian change his skin? I put it to you."

"Just so. They are a narrow-minded lot, and I must have done with them."

"The sooner the better," said Daleham, scarcely disguising the *double entendre.*

"Yes; the sooner the better, no doubt," Tomlinson replied. "I agree with you, but what about the will? I am bound to be practical."

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"So you are, Mr. Tomlinson, so you are. But there is a way through every gate or over it; mark the alternative, through it or over it."

Mr. Tomlinson remarked strongly upon the stubbornness of aged ladies who associated the disposal of property with the adoption of principles, and contended that in the very act of denouncing the endowment of religion they did the very thing they denounced. His mind was not particularly clear upon the point, so his language was wanting in variety and colour, yet it was evident that he wished by some process of jugglery to counterbalance his own scruples by an objection to the unreasoning obstinacy of Miss Beebee. Men do sometimes seek to relieve subjective pressure by objective criticism, but the process is full of risk to the claims of integrity. Mr. Daleham proceeded cautiously and advised Mr. Tomlinson to be extremely circumspect, a piece of counsel which greatly enlarged Mr. Tomlinson's faith in Mr. Daleham's judgment. Rashness would have been fatal to Daleham's policy.

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"Be extremely circumspect," he said, "extremely so."

"Precisely, Mr. Daleham. You carry me completely along with you. Not a soul knows what Miss Beebee has done for me. I have kept a close mouth. When I have heard Paterson ranting about his principles I have seen how destitute he was of political wisdom, and how blind to the main chance. But what can you expect of a man with a foot as long as a canoe and a hand of the colour of mahogany? His hands betray his origin."

"Ah! you believe in the character being shown by the hand?"

"By such a hand as Paterson's, anyhow. That man is essentially vulgar, and his vulgarity is of course the explanation of his rudeness. I hope, however, you do not misunderstand me when I remark on his want of political wisdom, or suppose that I have in any way induced Miss Beebee to think of me in her will. She has acted entirely on her own responsibility—entirely—without suggestion or prejudice."

"Of course," said Mr. Daleham, "that is clearly understood. At the same time, Mr. Tomlinson, you and I must thoroughly

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understand one another if I am to be of any service to you. I may tell you that I see clearly how I can act with effect in the matter; but I must have your confidence, all the more so that where so large a sum is in question it may be worth my while to give up my whole time to it, in short make a business of it, that is make a success of it."

Mr. Tomlinson did not answer immediately. To make a business of it was of course to make a living of it. Mr. Daleham noted the silence, and mentally accounted for it without making a mistake.

"It is clear," said he, easily resuming the conversation, "that the will was made in your favour on the one ground of your Nonconformity ? ?

"That is absolutely certain."

"Very good; as you said before, that is fact number one. Your conscience now permits you, I will not say urges you, to abandon Nonconformity——"

"Yes, simply on the ground that its vulgarity is intolerable."

"Simply on the ground that its vul-

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garity is intolerable; just so; that may be called the social aspect; but you could not use that argument in talking to Miss Beebee, because it implicates her own refinement,—you see that, don't you? Very well; then be careful as to its use. You claim the right to change your mind as light increases——"

"Certainly; a living man may change his mind."

"Yes; and a living woman may change her will, and drop you."

"The very point," said Tomlinson.

"The very point," echoed Daleham, "and a sharp point it is."

The two men had now come to the white stile in the Abbey Fields, and there they stood a moment or two in silence. Mr. Tomlinson's legs really did seem short as he stood there, and his face looked shiny rather than radiant as he turned his eyes towards the town. As the heir to twenty-five thousand pounds, Mr. Tomlinson was not without a sense of self-importance, a kind of landlord feeling, a sort of squirely consciousness making its way through the fading memories of clerical humiliation.

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"If you had the money," said Daleham, "you might build a house just here."

Tomlinson smiled feebly, and admitted the eligibility of the site.

"But jesting apart," said Daleham, "you will excuse me, I am sure, Mr. Tomlinson, if on my side I bring a little conscience to bear upon the matter, for I want to be fair all round. I admit your right to change your mind, and I cannot deny Miss Beebee's right to change hers. Now can I, as a man of honour,—you see the point,—know that you have altered your ecclesiastical standpoint, and allow Miss Beebee to keep alive a will she would not have made but for the conviction that your Nonconformity is as obstinate as her own?"

Mr. Tomlinson sharply demanded what he meant by the inquiry.

"Pardon me," said Daleham, "nothing is to be gained by excitement. I speak as a man of honour, or, if you like, as a man of the world, and I want to act conscientiously and justly in a very critical case."

"I don't want you to interfere in it at all," said Tomlinson in a new tone.

"Pardon me," Mr. Daleham replied,

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"there is an implied sequence in business affairs — a sort of unexpressed logic — if you change a man's knowledge, you change his responsibilities; half an hour ago I knew nothing of this case, but now I know that you want my assistance to bring about an issue which may bring my honour into question, and therefore I wish to know what is right and what is wrong. I can quite conceive that Miss Beebee herself might desire to consult me upon the whole subject. A rumour may reach her that your Nonconformity has become modified: I might be at the Green Hollows at the very time: I might be asked to give an opinion; and my one anxiety is simply to act as a man of honour."

It had not occurred to Mr. Tomlinson, great as was his political wisdom, that Miss Beebee might consult Mr. Daleham, but now that the idea had been suggested, Mr. Tomlinson was so overcome that he sat down on the white stile and drew up his feet entirely out of sight. Mr. Daleham walked leisurely round the globular figure, pausing to take in a good view of the back and to express his emotions by unseen

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facial signs. Mr. Daleham simply wished to know his duty.

"Remember," said Mr. Tomlinson, "you are already pledged to my side."

"Certainly, Mr. Tomlinson, in the matter of sympathy: of course I am; but you miss my point. In the event of my being asked to give an opinion upon the other side, am I to act as if I knew nothing?"

"You can say that you have already taken up a position."

"But if I am asked whether it is right to take up a position without hearing both sides of the question, what answer am I to return?"

Mr. Tomlinson was silent.

"You see," Mr. Daleham continued, "I am bound to look at questions of this kind as a man of honour and a man of the world. You have been elaborately trained for the pulpit, and of necessity you have had next to no experience in practical matters; in fact, to speak quite candidly, my feeling is that if you had the five-and-twenty thousand to-morrow, you would not know what to do with it; you see, your mind is necessarily under a strong

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spiritual influence, and is, if I may so say, steeped in theology——"

Mr. Tomlinson threw out his little legs, and turned himself impatiently.

"Whereas I am a man of the world ——"

"I always thought you were a man of science," said Tomlinson, with a veiled sneer.

"Incidentally I am," Daleham replied; "but of course a man cannot always live upon science. We must eat to live, and to earn bread we must work at something, or in some way set the machine going."

"Well, then," said Daleham, after a pause, "there is a clear understanding between us. I appreciate your confidence, and promise to respect it: not a word by way of initiative will pass my lips: I am as silent as the grave until a question is put to me; but when a question is put, I must consider what answer I am to make as a man of honour."

This reiteration of the words "a man of honour" quite nettled Mr. Tomlinson. It was a little too much to hear them over and over again, especially as Mr. Tomlin-

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son did not remember ever to have heard any one else apply them to the same person. But he must now hold his tongue as with a bridle, or this man of honour might by some miracle in casuistry transfer his sympathy and confidence to the other side. Mr. Tomlinson had allowed himself to be mastered by one idea and to be pushed in one direction, and was now sorely in need of an alternative. It is true that a very severe analysis of his motives might have revealed the active presence of personal vanity ; on the other hand, reproaches will be modified by the recollection that it must be extremely difficult to have any intimate relations to so respectable a sum as five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and to go up and down the world in a spirit of self-oblivion. In estimating human conduct some allowance must always be made for circumstances of which we may be ignorant, so we will not be too hard upon Mr. Tomlinson, even though he did allow himself to be driven headlong by one despotic idea.

" A way of escape occurs to me," said Daleham, " a wide, open way."

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"Then why don't you name it?" said Tomlinson, testily.

"Instead of giving up Nonconformity in general, give up Congregationalism in particular, and go over to the Baptists."

"Pshaw! she hates the Baptist crew; she calls them Dissenting Ritualists."

"For the Baptists myself," said Daleham, "I have no particular respect. They are a squat lot of people, about five feet seven high, broad in the back, famous tea-drinkers, and stupid bigots."

Mr. Daleham had a strong opinion about Tomlinson also, but wisely suppressed it. His evil eye was upon Tomlinson. He saw money in that fat round thing. Tomlinson might turn out to be more profitable than amateur science had proved to be, and Daleham would lose no opportunity of making it so.

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## CHAPTER VI.

Canon Gray is my parish priest, and as good an old vicar as ever lived; a Balliol man who in his training days knew vastly more about sportmanship than about either philosophy or theology. If all vicars were like Canon Gray, religious life in England would work without perceptible social friction. He is popularly reported to have once said "hang theology," but if he did use that coarse and violent expression, he must have done so affectionately, a suggestion on my part which is strongly supported by the fact that Canon Gray was bitterly opposed to capital punishment. That the canon was broad-minded, not to say tolerant and hospitable, is clear from the circumstance that he is not only ready to walk and chat with me when we meet in the town, but is quite willing to read dissenting books and to listen to dissenting news. He likes to hear about Noxey and

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Whiteman, about Paterson and Tomlinson, about Daleham and Robson. He says it is downright fun to him to hear and to read about the dissenters, they do seem to him to have such a lot to say, and to have such odd ways of saying it. He generally sends me a note when he returns the books, sometimes, indeed, he sends critical remarks on which I set store as coming from a man who is at once jealous and friendly in his relation to the dissenters who keep his parish alive; from these notes and remarks I shall probably give a few extracts later on. Let me now report a visit to the genial canon.

The vicarage is in many respects the most comfortable-looking house in Midtown. Square, stone-built, grey with years, mullion-windowed, with a large fan of well-trimmed ivy spreading over one of the gables, what can look more clerically English, or more domestically comfortable? Dissenter as I am, and therefore more or less base-minded, I have an instinctive reverence for old churches, old mansions, and old haunts of all kinds, and

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this reverence was strongly upon me as I went up the avenue by which the partially secluded vicarage is approached. The very rooks cawing to one another were clerical rooks of the most advanced type. Not one of them knew that there was a Dissenter in the parish, much less suspected that a Dissenting minister was actually in the vicarage grounds. In such ignorance of contemporaneous history may even rooks live in ecclesiastical trees. In a few minutes I was in the library: nothing with yesterday's freshness upon it was in that retreat; fine old chairs on every hand, fine old books that might have made generations of vicars wise, fine old pictures that made me feel shockingly young and immature, and covered with the stigma of cheapness the one engraving, "Daniel in the lions' den," which grimly decorated the high-up back room which I called my study. What a dreamy feeling came over me as I sat in that asylum of ancient history! Who could enter into the spirit of that literary sanctuary and not feel ashamed of Dissent and sick of all ideas democratic? The air was fast making me a Churchman and a Conserva-

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tive. I looked round for something new, but in vain. The vicarage library was marked all over with venerableness, books which Methuselah thumbed, and chairs made out of the oaks of Bashan, nothing new, unless it might be just a little trace of white ashes which might have been made in the act of cleaning out a clay pipe, and that would have been the sole exception to antiquity if I had not caught sight of the clay pipe itself, carefully set up behind a folio volume marked *Codex Theodosianus*, which the vicar had, no doubt, been anxiously perusing.

Over our cup of tea, served in the library, the Vicar was nearly as cordial as a Dissenter. I was afraid he might have been too learned for me, and that he might have posed me with enquiries about the said *Codex*, or have asked my critical opinion about the *Codex Ecclesiæ Africanæ*, which stood immediately above it. There was, however, no attempt to humble me through the medium of the calf-bound folios, but every disposition shown to make me welcome and comfortable.

"Why don't you come over to the

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Church of England," said the Vicar, "and carry out your plans under proper supervision ?"

"Conscience," I softly said, without attempting to make a sentence.

"Bring your conscience with you, of course. Bring it, and come at once."

"My peculiar views," said I, longing for Paterson to help me out.

"Bring them too," the Vicar hospitably continued. "The Church is national. In a national church all opinions should be represented. Come over, all of you. Plenty of room. Don't delay. Do let us be neighbourly. No good can come of strife."

"The Thirty-nine Articles," I mumbled, with criminal brevity.

"Excellent !" said the Vicar. "I call them thirty-nine starting points, not stopping points. See ? You start there, but the Lord knows where you may go to. Look at Colenso."

"But in that way they may be turned into thirty-nine lies, may they not ?"

"Too severe, my friend, and you must see it to be so ridiculously severe. I call the Thirty-nine Articles a kind of wether-



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bell, don't you see. You have that on your neck, you know, and then you wander where you like, up a hill or down a valley ; there you are, and we know where you are, and we can find you if we want to, which in reality we do not, but still the bell announces your whereabouts."

The Vicar looked so intently in the direction of the *Codex Theodosianus*, that I asked him if he wanted the book, but he only wanted the clay pipe which stood behind it. I am bound to say the way in which the Vicar handled the pipe almost made me regret that I was not a smoker. How delicately he held it between finger and thumb, then cleared out the bowl, applying a long pin to the obstinate ashes which would not be tapped out ; then the filling process was evidently such a mute delight, then came the lighted spill, throwing a soft yellow light upon the jocund face, and finally the curling cloud floating leisurely around the good man's head, expressing the quiet content which filled the good man's heart.

"Dissent flourishes most in great cities, does it not ?"

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"Yes. I suppose so. Probably." This was my halting answer.

"Thought so," said the Vicar; "question of fresh air largely: confinement and dyspepsia go together: small towns and churchmanship; heated cities and Dissent; that's how I put it. They tell me that shoe-making places are worst of all, though I don't see why they should be. Now at Mixford there's quite a nest of shoemakers, and there is a flourishing Dissenting chapel there. By the way, that reminds me I have to drive over there soon, and if you will go with me, I shall be glad."

"I positively know next to nothing about Dissent," the Vicar continued, "I don't like the word, you know. It is not a pleasant word. It sounds so very unneighbourly and uncharitable. I wish we could hit upon some better term, something not so porcupiney and prickly. Now, between you and me, do you find much Dissent in the parish?"

"Well, sir," said I (I always said 'Sir' to the Vicar as if it were part of the rates and taxes), "in the parish we have Congregationalists, Baptists, Wesleyans, and

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others, and I believe the chapels are fairly well filled."

"Now what on earth," said the Vicar, with a little more spirit, "do all these people find to talk about? It seems to me that they dissent from one another quite as much as they dissent from the Church, else why don't they all meet together and pass under one name? That shows me that there is something wrong somewhere, and that after all the Church may be right. It never struck me before that the Dissenters dissent from one another, but I see it now. Important point that."

"But," said I, "there are many denominations within the Church: Broad Church, Low Church, High Church, and so on."

"Yes, yes, but, don't you see, they are, as you say, within the Church: they don't boil separate kettles on separate fires, or get their meal from different millers: that's the point: they don't attempt to break up the Church or scatter the property: they all love the old mother, and do what they can for her. Heaven knows there's no Puseyite tomfoolery about me. I never made crosses in my spelling book like Newman. I am a Protestant to the backbone——"

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"Then you are a Dissenter," I interrupted.

"Dissenter?"

"Yes; to protest is to dissent; you dissent from the Church of Rome."

"Ah! that's a very different thing," said the Vicar, "of course; certainly."

So much for the point of view. If you dissent from me, you are foolish, but if we both protest against somebody else, we are wise; not only so, our protest is an expression of conviction and an assertion of the sovereignty of conscience, but another man's dissent from us merely shows that other man's perversity and selfishness, and is deserving of severe reprobation. It is nothing more or less than a wicked exaggeration of individualism, and in the soul of it is simply a piece of inexcusable popery. When another man refuses to adjust his conscience by the meridian of my convictions does he not display the pettiest of little-mindedness and the most contemptible phase of personal vanity? I merely ask the question.

I went out early this morning to brace

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myself for a hard day's work at the desk by a walk in the direction of Eastfield, not deterred but rather stimulated by the fact that a considerable fog lay upon the borough of Midtown. Up the Golden Lane and away into the Abbey Fields, and the mist gradually became more and more silvery, lingering amongst the pines and the maples, and wreathing figures above the leafless hawthorn hedges, exciting my fancy, and drawing from me all sorts of absurd interpretations. Such a mist is a kind of ghost. Presently a rook cawed. Then a carrier's cart went jogging by, the driver giving me a civil salute on the general ground of humanity rather than on the particular ground of acquaintance. Then I was quite alone. How truly social was that solitude! I can fully adopt the ancient saying, "Never less than when alone." I seemed to overhear the meditation of the trees as they anticipated the blessedness of another spring, and the joy of the birds as they twittered in the high branches, and the sigh of awakening nature as the breeze breathed rather than blew across the many-coloured fields. Now I came to a

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point where many loamy roads met, and as I looked along the brown paths, without a visible traveller on all the winding ways, I bethought me of the meaning of all the footprints which had given the highways a kind of history: the footprint of the weary labourer; the footmark made by the little child doomed to begin life's battle years too soon; the blurred place where gossips had smoked and chatted many an evening hour. Here the plough-horse had left its broad imprint: there the riding-horse had struck fire from the bruised and splintered stones; and yonder, wheels had rolled to the field, the farmstead, the market-place, or the still churchyard. Half closing my eyes, I saw wondrous things in the exquisite anatomy of the trees, and all along the tinted line of the enlarging horizon. Birds wheeled and curved in the brightening air. A hundred yards away lay a little hamlet without sign of life, a sleeper dreaming on the landscape. On the other side there was a gleam as of sunlit water in the distance. This was a place to loiter in, to think in, to pray in. Standing alone in that soothing quietness, I made many vows. I would

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serve the Cross of the Nazarene as I had never served it before: my prayers should tremble with a deeper tenderness: my appeals should be enlarged and ennobled by a truer sympathy with human temptation and sorrow: my whole life should be a revelation of the goodness of God. Well for us that we have such times of solitary communion with the Spirit: the tears we then shed are cleansing waters, and the sorrow we then feel prepares us for the fast-coming joy. I never preach so gladly and strongly as after fellowship with nature. Of sharp and eager argument there may be less, but in place of it there is peace, a sense of force not human, a consciousness of ministry and progress covering an infinite space. In the midst of my reverie I heard the footsteps of a horse. A moment more, and the horse was in view. Presently a neighbour rode up.

"What, riding so early as this, Mr. Daleham?"

"Yes, just been having a trot round the copse."

On he passed. "Proputty, proputty,

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proputty, that's what I heard them say; proputty, proputty, proputty, as they cantered away." The scene was no better for that man's presence. For a moment the sacred glamour was gone, and nature took time to regain composure. How is it that some men vulgarise whatever they touch? How is it that they scatter the angels? It was always so with Daleham. Come where he might, the atmosphere always instantly changed for the worse. He was a pleasant man, not without intelligence, by no means disagreeable in appearance, and had always plenty to say, yet birds and flowers, parents and children, all felt that he was a shadow, a blight, a living sneer. In a few minutes my mental rest had returned, and I heard further gospel-speech from the gracious sun; but presently a traveller turned the corner, and I was gladly shaking hands with Mr. Robson, the radiant owner of Eastfield, just starting on some errand of mercy.

"The very man I wanted to see," said he.

"Of course," I remarked, "some dream must account for this."

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"The fact is," Mr. Robson continued, "Mr. Whiteman is exhausted; he has had a good deal of worry lately, and it has told upon him, and you know how depressed he is in consequence of his failing sight. A few of us have made up a little purse of fifty pounds, and we want you and Mr. Whiteman to run down to the coast for a week and leave your troubles in the sea. Think of it."

Mr. Robson hastened on, and I was left to think. I could not but wonder what Daleham wanted at the copse. Though a man of strictly scientific mind, and a severe rationalist, it was surprising how superstitious he was, how easily shaken, how prone to run away from shadows and to escape his own twilight society. Daleham's robust science made him quite a hero in the middle of the market place and in the middle of the day, but it was less potent in the sunset and in the quietness of his own house. At the same time, it was a strictly scientific mind. It ranged itself with great obstinacy against all theological speculation and supernatural interference with the affairs of men. The

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mind of Daleham was of that severe scientific type that rejected the miracles of the New Testament, and smiled at the feeble arguments founded upon them. It was an eminently judicial mind, and delighting in comprehensive and philosophical views, and despising all things narrow in conception and finite in issue. It was a stupendous mind. No chapel could hold it. A cathedral must be erected for its special accommodation. All Midtown knew that for tearing an argument to pieces and showing up with contempt, absolutely withering in its severity, all pulpit sophisms, the mind of Daleham stood alone. It was undoubtedly very curious that Mr. Daleham was braver in daylight than in darkness, and that he was noted for seeing forms and shapes which nobody else could see, and that no consideration could induce him to cross the churchyard alone on a moonlight night. This might be a mere peculiarity of greatness, for it is certain that Mr. Daleham was so far a devotee of science, that he borrowed the *Scientific Review* of Mr. Thomson, the chemist, every month, and never voluntarily returned it. I wonder

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what he was doing at the copse? Had the creaking of some branch frightened him a few nights before? had some black ghost scared him? Nothing of the kind, perhaps. Why suspect such a keen debater? Maybe he had been putting to the test some novel theory or some much-involving experiment. Rationalists are bound to be consistent, and if consistent, they cannot be superstitious.

I have just come across some of the Vicar's notes, and a few memoranda of his breezy talk, and may as well use them at this point:—

"The kind of hubbub you live in would simply drive me mad; I should be in a delirious fever certainly in a month. What speechy and spouty people Dissenters must be! You always seem to be haranguing one another from an invisible platform, and to be expecting somebody to contradict and anger you. Why are you so combative? I admit that there is a kind of cleverness among you, but if I may speak frankly, it is of a very crude and rasping quality, the sort of cleverness

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that is always getting into scrapes by cheekiness and getting out of them by impudence. Dissenting cleverness lacks finish, not blacking-brush polish, put on from the outside, but the sort of bloom which expresses an inner healthiness and does credit to a sunny climate. We have clergymen in the Church of England who have come from Nonconformist communions, but I assure you that not one of them was ever mistaken for an Oxford man: they are clever enough, especially at a rough-and-ready kind of public speaking—a thing on which I set less and less value the older I grow—but they carry signs which cannot be mistaken, roughnesses all the rougher that they are mixed up with a kind of pedantic propriety that is always wondering what impression it is making. One can always feel that they are trying to talk faultless grammar, and that they are very thankful when they get to the end of a sentence without violating some rule in syntax, but, as I have just said, there is no mistaking them, and the finer their talk the more distinct is the mark of (pardon me) the Dissenting beast. Take the man Paterson,

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whom you so approvingly describe. The honesty of that man, though beyond all question, is of the very coarsest grain, the sort that would be immensely popular with a mob of uneducated and half-educated people. A man like your friend, Paterson (whom I hope to know some day, if you will introduce me) could not stand his ground for an hour against such a reasoner as Barnett, of Balliol. Paterson would think Barnett a wriggler and a Jesuit, and why? Simply because Barnett sees a thousand things bearing upon an argument which would never occur to a straight-line mind like Paterson's, — an honest, shop-keeping mind, I say again and again, but without a touch of philosophic genius and grasp. If a foreman carpenter talked to me in Paterson's style, I should admire the bluff honesty of the man and pay him his wages without grudging, but no Balliol man could drive his argument over such rough pavement. Barnett will splinter every word until he gets its clearest meaning, and urge his way into the deepest metaphysics to lay hold of a starting-point, and when he has ceased to cross-examine you it will be no fault of his if

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you have kept a secret from him. Will you join me in trying to bring about a meeting between Barnett and Paterson, at the vicarage? Paterson will find himself in a new world, and for that matter so will Barnett. Remember, Barnett is not the man to rush into a conversation; we shall have to inveigle him by starting a discussion outside of him, so to say, and leave him to come in just where he pleases. For a few minutes he may seem to be dead asleep, but he is never so dangerous as when he appears to be unconscious."

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## CHAPTER VII.

I WAS immensely taken with the idea of bringing Paterson face to face with the redoubtable Barnett of Balliol. As dissenters we talk one another into the sincere belief that all the argument is on our side, and into the further sincere belief that everybody on the other side is given over to strong delusion to believe a lie. When I mentioned the possible duel to Paterson, he rose to the challenge like a soldier and a hero. He had just returned from a "monster demonstration" in favour of free church principles, and left the Establishment without an argumentative leg to stand on. The demonstrators had cheered until they were hoarse, and waved their handkerchiefs for minutes together in the wildest delight. The bishops had been eloquently described as white-robed self-seekers (vehement cheering), the steeple-house had been described as the

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half-way inn on the road to Rome (tremendous applause), and the sale of livings had been denounced with some indistinctness of meaning, as the "saturnalia of the pit" (vociferous cheering in round after round, women waving their open parasols, and men throwing up their hats in the air). The whole "demonstration" gave immense encouragement to the Nonconformists, and led them to think that it might have an important influence upon "the Government of the day." Paterson had been a leading speaker at the "demonstration," and had produced a tremendous effect upon his own throat, as was proved by a most rasping hoarseness. Paterson's travelling expenses to the scene of tumult had come to thirteen-and-sixpence, and after being examined how he made them amount to so much, the organisers gave him half-a-guinea and a vote of thanks. But nothing could daunt the valiant Paterson. In no fanciful sense was it true of my ardent friend that he "counted not his life dear unto him" that he might magnify and promote the truth. To himself every argument he used was true, although to others his reasoning seemed occasionally to be



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richer in emphasis than in logic. Paterson's emphasis was undoubtedly forcible.

It did not take long to arrange preliminaries. Paterson felt sure he could burn Barnett up in a very short argument. He even went further, and mentally challenged the whole Establishment to arise and behold the fray. Paterson needed no stimulant. Something better than alcohol quickened his pulses. In vision he saw Barnett supplicating for mercy. This, in vision,—now for the facts.

Barnett of Balliol was, no doubt, a remarkable-looking man, conspicuous for the kind of ugliness which for the moment excludes all other thoughts, yet which mysteriously disappears under the intellectual action of conversation, and replaces itself by the kind of radiance which often silvers the roughest crags and headlands seen on the sea-shore. At seventy the old man was noticeable for bodily as well as mental vigour, and for a keen interest in all the changing aspects of the times, not at all the doubly old man who sighs over his yesterdays, but the venerably young man

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who believes that the brightest sunshine has all yet to come. The first glance as he came into the Vicarage library showed me that Barnett of Balliol belonged to the Church militant, and that under an undoubtedly pleasant exterior lay a whole armoury of weapons, offensive and defensive. He was withal an Englishman to be proud of, because of an inborn dignity and a lofty graciousness which must have made an impression upon the dullest observer. The moment he came into the room I felt I was a Dissenter, and that by no possibility could Barnett of Balliol have been one. No. I never knew any Dissenter of that pattern. I do not know what it was, but something separated him from us, and gave him a right to speak the first word in judgment. We could not have praised him without being conscious of impertinence, yet when he nodded to us we seemed to think that something unusually agreeable had occurred. I was quite touched with Paterson's get-up, the more so that my description of Barnett of Balliol had evidently put him upon his best behaviour. I knew at once that Paterson was a Dissenter. "The dissi-

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dence of Dissent" was written upon every seam of his too shiny broadcloth, the deep creases of which showed with what care Janet had been in the habit of folding her pastor's Sunday coat. I did not inquire into the matter too closely, but I believe the Dissenter, in his anxiety not to fall below the occasion, had thoughtfully applied a little pomatum to the stubble which he was pleased to call his hair—a personal attention which implied a subtle compliment to the Church on the one hand and a sense of what was due to Dissent on the other. Paterson's boots I did notice, and I am afraid they caught the wakeful attention of Barnett of Balliol. They were unmistakably Dissenting boots in every dimension known to magnitude, and in the motley character of Janet's blacking, yet with calm audacity, the result of blessed unconsciousness, they were displayed at full length upon the hearth-rug of the vicarage library. Though Barnett of Balliol saw all this, yet in his smile there was no sneer. The man who had learned Tacitus by heart before he left his father's vicarage, who passed an examination in Juvenal the first day he came up to Bal-

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liol, who read Lysias, Cicero, and Terence, by way of incidental recreation, and who, from such beginnings, went forward from honour to honour, until Barnett and Balliol became almost interchangeable terms, was a man of the world, a cleric, and "a fine old English gentleman," much less likely to sneer at the rusticity of agricultural Dissent than some shopkeepers who have become too suddenly rich to continue their attendance at chapel. Barnett of Balliol could shoe a horse or construe the darkest passages of Euripides: he could light a poor cotter's fire in the time of sickness, and give the old man's pillow a shake, and then dispute with Thirlwall the accuracy of the Bishop's translation of Niebuhr: in the same summer he had gone holiday-making with all his poorest parishioners, and filled up odd times by turning into Greek the "Siege of Corinth," and into Latin the "Bride of Abydos." What wonder if such a man understood too well the practical side of life to sneer at Paterson's boots, and yet knew too much of the philosophy of history to be satisfied with Paterson's Dissent? Like every man in the class to which he in-

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tellectually belonged, he saw too clearly the intricate relations of things to be able to talk without punctuation, and on that account, being unable to reduce the world to an epigram, he was often characterised, by the ignorance which is as unjust as it is unrestrained, as a shuffler and a trimmer. When will the world learn the moral mystery of distance, the difference between things near and far off, and the need of telescopes as well as spectacles? Let us hear the talk of Barnett of Balliol, and measure its weight as against the assaults of Dissent.

"What I contend for," said Paterson, "is the right of the individual conscience."

Barnett of Balliol leaned slightly forward in the great armchair, and said—

"What is the individual conscience?"

"The conscience of the individual," Paterson concisely replied.

The Vicar assented, and I turned in my chair to intimate that Paterson had scored one. But Barnett of Balliol continued—

"What is an individual?"

We all murmured more or less distinctly that this was driving things too finely,

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because surely this was the kind of knowledge that is born with a man. But Barnett of Balliol calmly continued—

"There is no such thing as an individual, that is to say, a personality that is self-contained; there is a personality *minus* or a personality *plus*, if you like; but there is no personality of any other kind possible in society."

We took time to consider this, and after a moment's pause Paterson said—

"You will admit, I suppose, that what is mine is my own?"

"Not at all," said Barnett of Balliol, "simply because it is impossible for anything to be yours. I deny the ownership."

"Barnett, whatever do you mean?" said the Vicar. "You have not turned revolutionist, I hope? Isn't my head my own."

"In a limited sense," said Barnett calmly, "and in a much more limited sense than you appear to suppose. But let me explain——"

"You had better do so," said the Vicar, genially smiling at Paterson.

"Society has rendered individuality im-

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possible except in a modified degree. As Emerson says, 'Every man is a quotation of his ancestors,' so we may add every man is the prophecy of his posterity. Suppose a world in which there is only one man; there you would have what may be called an individual, but the moment another man enters the world that individuality is modified; let a thousand men come, and the modification is proportionately affected; let controversy arise amongst them, and some plan of suppression of individuality must be adopted, or corporate existence would be impossible. In this sense, society destroys individuality by enlarging it. Society is a unit."

This was not the turn which Paterson expected the conversation to take, so he was unprepared to reply.

"Let me ask Mr. Paterson," said Barnett of Balliol, "if controversy never arises in an Independent community, say in his own chapel?"

"No doubt of it," said Paterson; "that must be admitted and deplored; at the same time, you must look at us ideally and not literally."

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"Very good. I am quite willing to do so. But do you see the consequence?"

"What is it?"

"Why, that if I have to look at chapel ideally, you must look at church ideally, and that being the case, I must have the best of the argument."

The Vicar thought this was good. I myself was about to agree that the demand was equitable, when the Rev. Edwin Bonas was suddenly announced. The newcomer was a curate attached to the High Church party, and had by some means transformed himself into what appeared to be an automatic coat. I am not sure that I ever saw so much coat in all my life. We were respectfully pointed out as two Nonconformist (Nonconformist is not so offensive as Dissenting) ministers, whereupon Mr. Bonas put a glass into one eye, looked steadily in our direction, and said, "Rawly!" Then turning to Barnett of Balliol, he added—"Just been reading a sweet sermon upon the death of St. Vincent of Paul—remarkable man—shepherd boy—foot of the Pyrenees—died at eighty-five." The Vicar would have said some-

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thing, but Mr. Bonas turned to us and continued, first fixing his eye-glass,—"Declined all dispensations during his sufferings—would not accept dispensations from the recitation of office—longed for martyrdom—sorry he was not in Geneva when the plague was raging—sorry he was not at Barbary when the pestilence was there"—then suddenly catching sight of Paterson's boots, he said—"Rawly!"

"Very good man, no doubt," said the Vicar, meaning politely to change the subject and renew the conversation.

"Oh, very, very indeed," said Mr. Bonas, "so deep; died in the autumn, early autumn;" and here is another book I wish to read, "Discourses during the Octave of Corpus Christi," (then explanatorily to the Dissenters) "the second feast of the Nativity." Barnett of Balliol was not sorry for this interruption, as it gave him a little breathing time, nor did Paterson exhibit any signs of impatience, as he was evidently amused with a totally new specimen of human nature. The Vicar, too, rather enjoyed the variation, wondering much how it would strike the Dissenting mind.

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Barnett of Balliol explained the position of affairs, and then continued—

"See what the Church is when viewed ideally: a whole nation baptised in the Divine Name; a whole nation uniting in common prayer; a whole nation connecting itself with the vital currents of Providence and inspiration,—I own that the ideal argument is one of the very best for the use of the friends of the Church."

"You see," said Paterson, "our Church ——"

Here Mr. Bonas fixed his eye-glass and exclaimed—"Rawly!"

"Our Church is built upon the lines of the family."

"Which family?" the curate anxiously inquired.

"My friend's question is quite fair," said Barnett of Balliol; "it is seriously meant, and an answer will help the argument. Consider a moment. When you say 'family,' what do you mean?"

"I simply mean 'family,'" said Paterson; "the word cannot have two meanings: family means family."

"Pardon me," said Barnett of Balliol; "I venture to think you are confusing

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terms. If you will not think me troublesome, I will venture to ask you for a precise definition."

"Find me," said Paterson, "a father and mother, and say five or six children, and you have what I venture to call a family."

"So you have," said Barnett, "and now you have it, what do you make of it?"

"I say," Paterson continued, "that family is in a sense the pattern of an Independent church" (here a voice said—"Rawly!") "I want no clearer type: the family is self-complete, self-supporting, self-governed; so is an Independent church."

"Every one of which propositions," said Barnett, "I distinctly deny."

"Certainly," said Mr. Bonas.

"But my point," Barnett continued, "is that you have not formed the true conception of a family, or rather, what you say may have some bearing, requiring much modification, upon *a* family, but a higher and nobler idea of *the* family seems not to have occurred to you. I contend that the Church of England can make a stronger use of the term than any Independent

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church can, only it must be the true family—the human family."

"But," said Paterson, "the Church is an institution gathered out of the human family."

"Only in a sense," Barnett of Balliol replied; "from my point of view the human family is the material which has to be constituted into a church. But let me point out to you that your use of the term 'family' is argumentatively faulty in being incomplete; it is incomplete because your 'family' must be dissolved by mere time; children outgrow the family lines, and separate, and enter into other relations, but no man outgrows the human family, or can detach himself from the larger relations of society. What say you?"

I believe that at this moment the curate caught sight of the pomatum, for fixing his eyeglass and looking intently at Paterson's head, he said "Rawly!"

"But now," said Paterson, evidently feeling that he had never been in so severe a grip before, "instead of talking about the whole human family, let us talk about

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some particular country, say England, and my contention is that the nation as such has nothing to do with the control of religion."

"What is a 'nation'?" said Barnett.

"A nation is a country; England is a nation——"

"Pardon me," said Barnett of Balliol, seeing Paterson's weakness in definition; "let me ask you one question, Who made the nation?"

"I hardly understand you," Paterson replied.

"I will explain. It appears to me that we are in danger of supposing that nations made themselves, that God did not recognise nations as such; now I protest against such atheism; if there is one truth more vividly realised than another in the historical parts of the Bible, it is the unity of nations and their consequent organic responsibility. We must not create a fancy Providence that favourably regards certain freeholds, and leaves the rest of the earth unblessed or unredeemed. God is the God of families, the God of nations, the God of the whole earth, the God of all flesh. It seems to me, Mr. Paterson, that all your definitions need enlargement."

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"All that is true," said I, rashly joining in the conversation, "but as the nation does not attempt to interfere with liberty of political opinion, why should it set up a form of religion? Your reasoning would seem to require consolidated politics as well as consolidated theology—a hierarchy in the State as well as a hierarchy in the Church." I was amazed at my temerity; yet even in the presence of Socrates, I felt that I had scored a point. My comfort was rudely disturbed by an inquiry made in the most courteous tone by Barnett of Balliol.

"Do you not," said he, "see the sophism of such reasoning?"

I wish he had himself pointed out the sophism instead of asking me to name it. There is cruelty, surely, in asking a man to show exactly where and how he has made a fool of himself.

"I don't see it," said Paterson.

"Nor do I; but if you will call my attention to it, I shall be glad."

"Don't you see it, Gray?" Barnett of Balliol inquired of the vicar.

The genial vicar took his pipe from

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behind the Codex, tapped out the ashes, and admitted that he did not see anything sophistical anywhere.

"The sophism," said Barnett, with Socratic tranquillity and mischievousness, "lies in the fact that the terms are not equal. On the one hand is the term 'religion,' and on the other hand is the term 'politics,' and between the terms there is positively not the shadow of any argumentative relation. Now if instead of 'politics' you will say 'patriotism,' you will equalise the terms and give the argument absolutely into my hands. We have a national patriotism; we recognise it; we are inspired by it; we punish its corruption; we allow a thousand opinions in politics, but we do not allow any tampering with patriotism: we hang the traitor; so it should be in things ecclesiastical; difference of opinion is consistent with unity of religion: a national church should express all shades of religious opinion if it would be a national church and not a national cemetery."

"Look at Colenso," said the vicar once more.

"But how can Bishop Colenso and Mr.

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Barnett be members of the same Church?" I inquired, with some confidence that I had put a poser.

"We are members of the same human family," said Barnett of Balliol.

"But how can you be members and ministers of the same Church?"

"Easily. Not only easily, but properly. We could not both belong to a sect, or a Dissenting communion, because every Dissenting communion would seem to be founded upon one or two vital points, wholly exclusive of the idea of national life and unity, whereas the Church of England is the Church of the nation, at least, as I have just said, ideally and as to purpose; being thus founded upon national lines, it must of necessity represent variety and even contradiction of thought, and in doing so it exactly reproduces the case of patriotism,—the Conservative and the Radical may represent nationally what the High Church and the Low Church represent theologically."

"But," said I, beginning to regret that I had spoken at all, "in the case of religion the subject is one and indivisible; in the case of politics many opinions may be honestly held."



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"Pardon me," Barnett of Balliol courteously replied, "you do not preserve the equality and balance of the terms; the question is not between religion and politics, but between religion and patriotism. Variety of opinion is just as allowable in the Church as in the State, and my contention is that opinion may widely differ without affecting the love of truth; more, the very love of truth may provoke or develop variety of opinion."

At this point I subsided in favour of Paterson, the curate looking at me as he might have looked at an ass that had been trying to fly, and the Vicar soothing himself vigorously with Noxey's golden shag.

"I am certainly amazed at one thing," said Paterson, "and that is that you do not see that you dissent from us as much as we dissent from you, and therefore I do not see that the stigma of dissent should lie on one side. The simple fact is that we dissent from one another."

The curate said—"Rawly!"

"Not at all," was Barnett's reply. "We must have regard to historical sequence. The term dissenter may imply an order of

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succession without involving a stigma. When the Vicar asks me to dinner it is proper for me to say that I dined with him, and not that he dined with me. There is a right way of marking relations, and in that way the use of the description 'dissenter' must be limited."

"How do you Dissenters propose to get hold of the nation?" said the Vicar.

"A very proper enquiry," Barnett immediately added.

"Man by man," said Paterson.

The curate fixed his eye-glass, and made his usual comment.

"But that is not the Divine plan; with reverence be it spoken," said Barnett of Balliol. "Our Lord did not die for man by man, or man after man; He died for the whole world, and then offered the general blessing to the individual sinner. The analogy is evident."

The courtesy of the speaker's tone produced quite as much effect upon Paterson as did the arguments, and the arguments themselves were not a little increased in force by their adaptation to broader uses.

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It will be observed that Barnett of Balliol did not dispute the contentions of Dissent merely for the sake of achieving a victory in words. He admitted their force, but enlarged their scope, and simply asked Paterson to be faithful to his own logic. The paternal sweetness of the great ecclesiastic made a great impression upon me, even to the extent of convincing me that if the Church of England were disestablished, he could never find equality or restful brotherhood amongst the general mass of Dissenting ministers. A fine blood warmed his veins, and a broad culture chastened the emphasis whose exaggeration is often mistaken for conviction, and by so much separated him from men who, though naturally not inferior, belonged socially and educationally to a different stratum. Perhaps he might not show to so much advantage now, inasmuch as at the time of this narrative Oxford and Cambridge were literally the seats of English learning, and any culture outside them almost necessarily partook more or less of the roughness and pedantry of self-education. Circumstances have wholly changed. An enlarged intellectual train-

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ing has done a good deal towards levelling up the literary strata of the nation; yet even in view of such progress, it is only fair to say that Barnett of Balliol would in all times and places vindicate his right to rank with the noblest minds and illustrate the most perfect manners.

Up to this time I had been perhaps injuriously affected by Paterson's controversial violence, in the sense that it had made me studiously reticent in order, if possible, to dissipate the impression that all Nonconformists are equally hostile to the State Church. As a matter of fact, I made myself a kind of foil to Paterson. But after hearing Barnett the fire burned, and self-respect called upon me to speak out more distinctly than I had ever done before. Barnett's reasoning was so specious as to be at first sight conclusive, yet I felt that it overlooked some facts which utterly destroyed its cogency. If the interview had terminated at this point, the moral victory could have hardly been claimed for Dissent.

"With regard to the strong point you

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made of the ideality of the Church of England," said I, "it occurs to me that some important considerations have been omitted."

"Will you name one of them?" Barnett inquired with expressive graciousness.

"Yes. The ideal nation is itself a fiction. If the nation were one in sentiment and one in worship, the picture would be really pleasing. Or if we had to invent a nation, we could invent it according to your suggestion. But what is the fact? A theory ought to have some relation to facts, but yours has none; on the contrary, it is in direct opposition to them. More than one half of the English people do not attend the State Church. Where, then, is the ideality? They do not abstain because of spiritual indifference—for then your ideal would not be affected—they abstain because of distinct spiritual conviction and intense religious earnestness, and by so much they are daily destroying the practicability of your ideal, and are steadily and necessarily growing in the direction of another and to my mind better type. I speak respectfully in saying that the growing intelligence of the nation is against you."

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Barnett's countenance changed. He had been secretly hoping that his gracious manner and careful reasoning had impressed Paterson in a degree amounting to the first stage of conversion, but now that the quieter man had turned upon him, his hope, if not extinguished, was heavily beclouded.

"Do you make that statement seriously?" he inquired, with the Socratic caution which never forsook him.

"Certainly. My belief is that what I may call the independent and energetic intelligence of the country is against your ideal Church."

"I hardly understand the qualifying terms."

"I mean popular intelligence, the intelligence which men have acquired for themselves, the intelligence which is not afraid of tradition or superstition, the democratic intelligence."

"Well now," said Barnett, "to circumscribe a little—the Vicar, my friend Gray, will not be offended, I am sure—would you say that the intelligence of this parish of Midtown, is for or against the National Church?"

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I felt this to be a home-thrust, and that my answer might involve a good deal in the way of neighbourly feeling and confidence. But I could not silence the inward voice without violating both courage and justice.

"The question is a delicate one," I replied, "and the answer must, of course, be limited by my personal knowledge. If I knew more, I could say more, either on one side or the other, but, with this understanding, which I mean to protect me from rudeness, I do not hesitate to say that the intelligence of Midtown is against your reasoning."

Paterson exclaimed—"Hear, hear."

Bonas put up his eye-glass and exclaimed —"Rawly!"

The good-natured Vicar smiled, and relighted his ever-friendly pipe.

"Then you give no credit for intelligence on our side?" Barnett interrogatively remarked.

I protested. This was not fair to me. To deny intelligence to the other side was more and worse than simply absurd.

"Let me explain myself," I continued.

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"I am speaking of the people. I am taking the inhabitants of this particular parish man by man, and judging them as fairly and generously as I can; my distinct belief is that the preponderance of such intelligence as is open to cross-examination —that is, such intelligence as can give account of itself and vindicate itself—is on the side of Nonconformity."

"I thought," said Barnett, "that, as Nonconformists, you did not set much store by intelligence——"

Paterson stood bolt upright, but I restrained him.

"Quite a mistake," said I. "Our hope is in intelligence; we are afraid of ignorance, and ashamed of it: our people are hard readers, so much so that if you will make books the test, I engage to find more books and better books in the houses of commercial Dissenters than you can find in the houses of commercial Churchmen."

"But now," said the honest and genial Vicar, "I must put in a word for the parish, you know. What you say about books may possibly be true. I will not argue that point. But you will not dispute

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that the gentlemen of the town are to a man on our side ?"

"Excuse my smiling," said I, "but that statement I will meet with a flat denial. I may surprise you by saying that I hardly know an earnest, that is, a self-convinced, conscientious Dissenter, who is not a gentleman. I am able to bear testimony upon this point, and I am glad of this opportunity of bearing it."

Paterson closed the interview with an honest Dissenting speech. Paterson was stronger in lecturing than in conversation, as Barnett was probably stronger in conversation than in lecturing. Some men speak best whilst sitting. Even Douglas Jerrold was a dull man when he stood up. Metaphorically Paterson now got into the pulpit, and in a public meeting tone spoke of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, of the necessity of the new birth, of the sublime and heavenly purpose of the Christian Church, and in terms which were made strong by true emotion, repudiated all patronage that was merely political and official. I had no reason to be ashamed of Paterson's testimony, and I am bound

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to add that Barnett of Balliol listened to it with earnest attention. The whole impression produced upon my mind was to the effect that this controversy can never be settled by words. Much can be said upon both sides; upon both sides are genuinely honest and able men; and both sides must proceed along their respective lines, finding practical reconciliation in works of Christian charity. Beneficence is a powerful solvent.

As we left the vicarage library Mr. Bonas betook himself to a distant corner of the room, and so avoided the formality of shaking hands. I could not but feel that his eye-glass was fixed upon us. A sensation in the back told me that we were being looked at, and I was confirmed in the assurance when, as we stepped into the hall, I heard a voice behind us saying —"Rawly!"

When we were off the premises I said, "Paterson, I was proud of that little sermon you gave them to finish with, and I thought it was just like you to slap that old *Codex* as mercilessly as if it had been a pulpit Bible."

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The oratorical flame was still on Paterson's rugged face as he said, "What was that long-coated creature 'Rawly'-ing about? Had he a vegetable marrow in his mouth?"

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## CHAPTER VIII.

A VERY pleasant little lady was Miss Beebee, of the Green Hollows, able, like many other of the sincerest of mankind, to hide an incredible degree of obstinacy under an external amiability which seemed to be created for the express purpose of being imposed upon. Her voice, too, was remarkably tender, never meant to say No, even to requests not altogether reasonable, yet often used in the utterance of a will best represented by wrought iron. Miss Beebee was quite the head-centre of Dissent for miles around, every noted minister having been her guest on the occasion of anniversaries or other important Nonconformist celebrations, and every Nonconformist institution looking to her, and seldom in vain, for substantial assistance. Of all her clerical visitors Professor Stokoe stood first and foremost on every ground; not the least on the ground

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of his genial recitals of all the news which he innocently picked up in the course of his ministerial visiting. Miss Beebee liked to hear about ministers, not, indeed, in any mere gossiping sense, but as revelations of a species of character involving a fine mixture of mystery and sanctity. To Miss Beebee every minister was "a dear man," and every want of the "dear man" was regarded as a prayer addressed to her most solemn attention. In a word, Miss Beebee was to all appearance predestinated to be the friend and helper of all Nonconformist ministers.

"Do you know, dear madam," gurgled the Professor, "I have heard that Mr. Tomlinson is not—what shall I say?—is not—may I say—without doing him injustice?—is not as strong in his Nonconformist convictions as I believe he was at one time."

Miss Beebee suddenly became pale, and startled the Professor by saying—"Then I am afraid it is true."

"What, madam?"

"What you tell me, Professor Stokoe. Mr. Daleham has been here, and has told

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me various stories, but I suspected their truthfulness. I do not know much about that man. Have you any better authority?"

"My dear madam, my authority is Mr. Tomlinson himself. He used a very singular expression, the propriety of which I failed somewhat to discern; he said, to the best of my recollection, that he would 'jack it up,' from which I infer that he contemplates resignation in some form, I may say in some novel form."

"I must say, Professor," continued Miss Beebee, "that I was very much annoyed at one thing Mr. Daleham did. I am quite sure some of his words admitted of meanings which I strongly dislike."

The Professor's mind did not move easily from one subject to another. He was still angry, and still unintelligible. Could the whole innermost truth of things be known—those things which have not only never been put into words, but never explicitly admitted by the mind in its own secret communings—it might be found that the only man towards whom Miss Beebee had looked with significant partiality was the learned and gurgling

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Professor. Even this is almost too much to say, and, therefore it must be regarded without prejudice to Miss Beebee; still the film is necessary to the absolute completeness of things.

"Madam," said the Professor, "how large must a looking-glass be to allow of the whole stature of the observer to be seen at once?"

Just like the Professor this. Ordinary topics had to be introduced between outbursts of scientific information, and being thus introduced, were in danger of being forgotten or only imperfectly understood. Even love itself had to be set aside in favour of some new example in Natural Philosophy. Miss Beebee thought that the serious fixity of the professorial eye showed that the guesses of ignorance cannot impose upon the watchfulness of learning.

"Have you seen Mr. Tomlinson upon this matter, madam?"

"No, Professor, no, no. From Mr. Tomlinson I know nothing. To me he is the same as ever, a firm Nonconformist and a very earnest preacher. Mr. Tomlinson, you know, is very playful in his

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manner at times, and he may have been teasing Mr. Daleham merely for amusement——"

"Of course," said the Professor, "you must understand that the position of the eye has a good deal to do with the height of the mirror——"

"Yes, sir, but what has it to do with Mr. Tomlinson?"

"Just so," the Professor replied. "I was wandering for the moment. Let me see. What did he say? Oh yes. He said he would 'jack it up;' a singular expression. I never met with it before. I was just going to add that if the eye could be taken out of its socket and placed say on the end of the finger——"

"Oh, my dear Professor Stokoe!"

"Just so," the Professor hastened to say; "a mere supposition, of course; nothing more. Do not be alarmed; we need not pursue the subject."

Nor could they have pursued it if they wished, for at this moment Mr. Daleham himself was announced. He affected to be extremely delighted that Professor Stokoe was at the Green Hollows, and if



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the Professor had been equally delighted the joy would have been intolerable. But the Professor was not delighted: the Professor was disgusted; nothing could detain him, he would return in an hour after making a call in the immediate neighbourhood, but before going, he said to Miss Beebee, whose willing hand he held with professorial negligence, that the eye being where it was, and not on the end of the finger, it was not necessary in order to bring in the whole stature for the glass to be more than half the height of the observer. This was consolatory as well as scientific, though the statement did not wholly satisfy the lay-mind of his admiring hostess. Mr. Daleham was sorry the Professor had gone, even for an hour, as his own time was limited. He said the Professor's mind always awoke the ambition of his own, and the Professor's modesty always showed him the comeliest aspect of genius.

"On the whole, however," he continued, "it may be as well that the old Professor——"

"I have never looked upon him as old," Miss Beebee remarked.

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"A term of affection," Daleham quickly answered. "In point of years the dear Professor is anything but old, but his learning, his humility, his unselfishness, combine to draw out a kind of filial feeling—in wisdom he is centuries old; in years he is quite one of ourselves."

The last part of the sentence was meant to be impressive, but where the wax is unmelted the stamp takes no effect. Mr. Daleham thought that his influence, so magnetic and delicate, operating by half-expressed hints, rather than by direct appeal, melted all womanly hearts; but even Mr. Daleham was sometimes mistaken, although it must be allowed that now and then a woman had given him the impression that she was innocently blind to his wily ways at the very moment that she was amusing herself with a new phase of his hypocrisy.

"Pardon me, Miss Beebee," said he, "but to put the matter delicately, it is only right that you should be made aware of the fact that Tomlinson gibbers——"

"Whatever do you mean, Mr. Daleham?"

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"I mean, madam, that Tomlinson is little better than a gibbering maniac."

"Oh! how I wish the Professor would come back."

"Pardon, me, Miss Beebee; I must not be taken too literally. The man is sane enough in one aspect, but when a man trifles with his principles, professes to be a Nonconformist, yet is always pining for the Established Church, I feel that from a moral point of view he is not unjustly described when he is spoken of as a gibbering maniac. The older I grow the more determined am I to uphold the cause of civil and religious liberty all over the world."

"The Professor could help me better than any one," Miss Beebee said as if to herself. "I am walking upon uncertain ground."

"It would be presumptuous in me to offer my services," said Daleham, "nor would I venture even to hint at such a thing had not this idea of reducing the whole idea of Dissent to a scientific form, I may say even a scientific law, taken such possession of me. I do feel that we must get hold of the higher order of mind—the

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very highest order, in fact; this is the day of science; everything must be scientific; even morals must be regulated by science. If I had even so comparatively small a sum as one thous——"

"Here comes the dear Professor," exclaimed Miss Beebee, as she saw the venerable figure ambling up the solid gravel walk, appearing and disappearing amongst the thick fresh laurels. "Now I shall have the comfort of his counsel."

"The dear man!" said Daleham. "Good-bye, madam. The Professor's purpose and mine are absolutely identical. We are anxious about the success of Dissent. We would give our all to help the noble cause. Our fathers bled for it. But what can poor men do? Talents they may have, and devotion, but where money is essential——"

The Professor's gurgle broke off Daleham's sentence, and Daleham himself withdrew.

"My dear madam, I have been to see my brother Tomlinson, and should have been here earlier had not my attention been drawn to the remarkable group of tadpoles in a pool a little to the left of your beautiful grounds——"

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"And how did you find Mr. Tomlinson?"

"One moment. I am not prepared to deny that a tadpole begins life as a fish, and then becomes a tailed amphibian——"

"Did you get any information about him, Professor?"

"Well, I am coming to believe that the lamprey and the tadpole are descended——"

"I meant Mr. Tomlinson."

"Oh, certainly. Yes, I have been to see him, but he was not at home. I saw his partner in life, a person, I must say, whose conversation is a little enigmatical and perplexing."

Mrs. Tomlinson was not exactly enigmatical in the Professor's sense of the term; she was a very fluent and multifarious speaker, and no doubt bewildered Professor Stokoe by her swift and unreasoning flight from one subject to another. In ten minutes she went at least twice round the little creation in which she passed her simple life, and did her best to destroy the illusion that the ministry is a celestial profession. Mrs. Tomlinson made no secret of her likes and

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dislikes, and was notably and even ferociously consistent in her denunciation of "the deacons;" she wished she was "behind them;" she quite longed to "give them a good poking up;" in all her life she "never saw such a sleepy lot;" and "as for that Miss Beebee, she might be, and no doubt was, very rich, but if she was going to do anything for Mr. Tomlinson, she had better do it at once, and not put off until there was a funeral and a will read in public." Mrs. Tomlinson wanted everything done at once, and in her impatience, she had on one occasion distantly hinted something which did not raise her in Miss Beebee's esteem. Mrs. Tomlinson, it may be added without malice, considered that on account of her having been a sound Churchwoman before marrying an Independent minister, she not only conferred distinction upon Dissent, but acquired the right to abuse it.

In her perplexity, Miss Beebee sought the counsel of Mr. Paterson, whom she had long regarded, and with true instinct, as a man whose dissent was honest and

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self-denying. He would advise her as to Tomlinson's exact position, and would do so with fairness to all parties. She felt it to be unfortunate that Paterson was away lecturing when she called, but not hopelessly so, because she knew the faithful Janet, and could enjoy a friendly interview with that devoted creature.

"Sit down, ma'am, and welcome," said Janet, "I'm only sorry the sofa's so weared out, there's not a horsehair left,—" then a sigh that had a sword in the middle of it.

"All things wear out sooner or later," said Miss Beebee.

"Aye, aye," Janet replied, taking a corner of her apron to dust a chair that was speckless in its poverty, "and what do you think he's been and done now, ma'am?"

"Who?"

"Why master, as ye came to see."

"I cannot imagine."

"No, you cannot; he's been and given up ten pounds of his salary because them there deekings told him they couldn't

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afford it. I don't wonder that fat Tomlinson has made up his mind to be a parson i' church."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Master had a row wi' the fat thing, and I know he spoke his mind to him, for master will be plain and square; even deekings can't frighten master."

"I'm sorry about the ten pounds, Janet."

"Aye, and that there painter's wife swishing her new silk gown up and down the aisle just to get people to look at her, she ought to be ashamed of herself, and her painter body of a man sending in master a bill for eighteen pence for puttin' a pane o' glass i' the study window.

"Eighteen pence, every penny on't, for I took it myself, and to spite them I took it all in ha'pennies, and I laid the ha'pennies down one by one, and if they could hear what I was saying in my inside they wouldn't paint much that night."

"You felt it so, Janet?"

"Yes, and I made them feel it as well, for I know I can look black enough sometimes."

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"Perhaps some of the friends may make up the ten pounds."

"Tush. Neddy Foster, I must say, did send a bigger loaf the next week, and old Cobbler Swinburne sez to me, and I won't deny it, as I was going out to a shop one night, he sez, 'Janet, if I send up a pair o' boots will you see as the right party gets 'em?' That's how he talks: the cobler's a poor talker but he means well."

"And Mr. Paterson does not complain?"

"Complain, and what good would that do? What does a gate get by creaking? You never hear him complain. He's more like to pray. Why d'ye know he gets on his knees every night against that old sofa as ye're sittin' on, and he seems to me to be tellin' God no end o' lies about mercies and blessings and comforts. God forgive me, I could throw a dish o' cold water on him when he's talkin' such stuff."

"O Janet!"

"That's how I feel, ma'am, and that's the reason I cannot enter that miserable brick oven of a chapel and look at all those purse-proud painters and drapers; so

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I just stays out and gets a bit o' something for him to eat when he comes home all of a sweat."

That night there arrived at the manse a ham, a cheese, twelve pounds of black tea, six pounds of coffee, and a keg of butter.

"Lor' ha' mercy upon us," said Janet, "if he sees them things he'll never come away fro' the sofa. I know what I'll do, I'll show them to him one at a time, and a week at a time, and that'll stop him. Now I wonder who sent them all? I feel as I was swimming round and round in a kind of earthquake."

The next day, or it was perhaps the next but one, poor Janet had to undergo a still stranger experience, the full account of which I had to pick up bit by bit; and even now having picked it up, I am quite at a loss how to report Janet's pungent exclamations. It appears that a strange-looking man, wearing gold spectacles, called upon Mr. Paterson very early in the morning, and acted in so peculiar a

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manner as he stood on the doorstep, pulling off his gloves, as utterly to bewilder the prosaic Janet.

"And who may ye be wanting, standin' there?" she inquired, being nettled by the man's silence.

"For the moment, my dear lady," was the quaint reply, "allow me, if you see no impropriety in the act, to remove the perspiration from my brow——"

"And what with?" said Janet, "surely you are not going to wipe your brow with a nightcap,—bless us all!"

"O, I observe," said the visitor, "I observe——"

"For goodness sake, come in," Janet interrupted, "or all the street will be here, —come in, and sit ye down; ye seem dazed like."

"For the moment," said the stranger, "I forget my good friend's name—a very sincere person—would you mind refreshing my memory——"

"What do wi' your memory—?"

"What is the name of the sincere person who lives here?"

"And what do you want to know for?"

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Janet inquired, "we dunna answer questions because we're asked them."

"It has quite escaped me, and to the untrained mind I must present a very curious spectacle——"

"No, no, nothin' o' that sort here," said Janet, "we've got spectacles enough a'ready, but I never see'd a nightcap used for a pocket handkerchief afore."

"Very mortifying," said the visitor, "extremely disquieting, and in a sense the complications of the extremely novel——"

"O here's master," said Janet, "I see him pass the window——"

"Why Stokoe," exclaimed the fatigued but invincible Paterson, "how glad I am to see you——"

"For the moment, my dear friend, your name——"

"Don't you know Paterson?"

"Paterson,—Paterson,—my dear friend, —why——" and here the professor sat down on a weak part of the sofa and partially disappeared from view, afterwards explaining that the "propriety" of such an act might be thoughtlessly questioned.

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## CHAPTER IX.

It chanced that I met Paterson as he was returning home, about two days after this interview. He then fell into the happy vein of elevated conversation. He had greatly enjoyed a conference upon disestablishment which had just closed in an adjoining town. The feeling of the conference, he assured me, was that the National Church was doomed, especially after a paper by the Rev. William Symes, which forcibly shewed that even the bishops, taken as a body, were no better than they should be. Little by little I lured him away from political questions and encouraged him to speak upon the infinitely greater subject of preaching. He then spoke at large upon the preacher's work. I knew well that Paterson was a genuinely good preacher, yearning over his congregation with real pastoral solicitude, and eagerly looking for the growth

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of the seed he had sown. We spoke of preaching as we returned. Paterson liked the sacred work more and more, and continually chastened himself by inquest into his spirit and motive. For my own part I liked him much better when he enlarged upon preaching than when he denounced Church establishments. Many a time as Paterson has given me his views of the pulpit I have wished that all aspirants to that eminence could have heard him. I am afraid I can but poorly report some of the things I have heard him utter, but I can never forget the impression they made upon me. "What does the word 'preach' really mean?" he would say. "Does it mean to read a clever essay upon a text? When I read an essay, do I really trust God? Do not I magnify myself? On the other hand, when I do not read, do not I magnify myself still more? saying in effect, 'Look at me! I want no notes! I need no paper! I do not crawl, I do not walk, I do not even run; behold, I fly!' An awful impertinence it is for a man to preach unless divinely compelled to stand up that God may use him in the sanctuary. I have heard a man of many

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words and most aggravating fluency speak of firstlies and secondlies until these numerals made quite a jingle in the church. This is not dividing the word of truth; it is clipping it, pounding it, tearing it, and mangling it most cruelly. God does not want our rhetorical fineries. He stains the pride of all glory. The ships of Tyre were built of the fir trees of Senir, and the masts were taken from the cedars of Lebanon, their oars were made of the oaks of Bashan, and their benches of ivory brought out of the isles of Chittim, yet the Lord sank them in the depths of the seas."

"Oh, Paterson," said I, "talk to me in this strain whenever we meet, and let us forget the miserable controversies of the time. Talk to me about things eternal. People think you are always debating and quarrelling, and that you love to fight and to contradict. I wish they knew you better. I wish they could hear you pray."

Moved by curiosity to hear a blind man preach—yes, blind, those orbs so grand

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quite darkened—Lily Gray, the Vicar's daughter, has actually been to the Baptist chapel, an offence against usuage which was aggravated by the fact of her having been accompanied by Mr. Runch, the highly-esteemed senior churchwarden, who up to this time had stood next to the church steeple in reputation for steadfastness. The plea that Miss Gray had gone "merely out of curiosity" went for nothing in the judgment of many angry parishioners. The leading clothier in the town, so prosperous that he could afford either to give two years' credit or allow fifteen per cent. discount for cash, said that the days of Guy Fawkes were returning, and that the sun of England was setting amid omens which he was afraid to contemplate and unwilling to interpret. Mr. Edwards, the rubicund brewer, bluffly said,—"Omens or no omens"—a phrase expressive of boundless ignorance and independence—"he would be hanged if he would stand it," but as many slender causes had hitherto kept Mr. Edwards from the gallows, his threat was not looked upon as alarming. "I'm blest," said the junior churchwarden, "if I know what's coming



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upon us; they will want the church bells now they've got the churchwarden. For some time I have thought Miss Gray was not with us heart and soul." "Heart and soul!" echoed Edwards, without adding a word, for what can a man say when he is blue with fury? At such moments words are but idle breath. The clothier advised the brewer to control himself, but the brewer received the suggestion with scorn.

Miss Gray could not imagine what a Dissenting chapel was like, nor what the people did when they were in it. "Do let us go early," said she to Mr. Runch, "and then we shall see them all as they come in. It will be so droll! Oh dear, Mr. Runch, do you think, after all, it will be quite safe to go? Perhaps a judgment will fall on us. But, oh dear! I should so much like to go." Mr. Runch paused a moment, and then slowly gave it as his opinion that the adoption of proper precautions would render danger almost impossible. Miss Gray besought Mr. Runch to adopt anything he liked to save them both from anything like a judgment, or catching anything either undesirable or infectious. "Cam-

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phor, Mr. Runch, they do say, is an excellent thing." In due time Miss Gray and Mr. Runch were courteously accommodated with a seat which commanded a clear view of most of the chapel. The young lady's eyes glittered as she looked round with almost wild expectancy, as if she did not know, yet could not help wondering at what impossible place the wild beasts might suddenly burst forth. Her whispered annotations were explicit and sincere, though narrowly escaping cynicism and even rudeness. "What a fright of a bonnet! Oh, Mr. Runch, is that a real Baptist bonnet, that one with a cockatoo feather? Look." "And there's that horrid old post-office man in the very front of the gallery." "Do look at that queer woman in the corner just under the gas-bracket, with all the colours of the rainbow in her bonnet." "What rickety old men! what odd figures! what droll expressions! I never knew there were such people in the town. Are they all Baptists? Isn't it well for the minister that he is blind?" These running comments might have gone much farther, but were stopped by the sitting down immediately in front

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of Miss Gray of a well-known pastrycook in the town, whose gold eyeglass and supernatural solemnity signalised him as a high dignity in the Baptist chapel, bearing many responsibilites and literally aching with solicitude. But innocent Miss Gray was unaware, like many other fluent critics, that she herself and the senior churchwarden were being commented upon by Baptist observers. "Come to take a rise out of us," said Mrs. Bidwell. "Now that I see Mr. Runch with his hat off," said Mr. Langport, as he ponderously turned round to Mr. Noxey, "he is not at all intellectual-looking; going about with his hat on, he's rather smart-looking, but he little knows what he owes to his hat." "She does not know how to behave herself in the sanctuary," said Mrs. Lambert, hardly recovered from a fit which she had had in the afternoon; I can see, even from the gallery, how she is trying to keep the laugh down." "In the last days perilous times shall come," said the rhetorical Riddle to "Johnny dear," who for some time had abandoned the practice of shaving on Sunday evenings, and resumed his attendance at chapel. "It is wonderful,"

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Langport continued to whisper, "what a difference a hat does make: now there's our esteemed deacon; when he puts his hat on he becomes a pastrycook at once, but when he comes out of the vestry with his hat off he is every inch a deacon." The opening of the minister's door put an end to all this whispering. Once his foot was squarely on the first step, Mr. Whiteman ascended the pulpit as if he saw every step before him. Mr. Whiteman was quite himself, so well prepared for the service as to be quiet, simple, and joyously solemn. His subject lay before him like an open landscape, every turn of the sunny road familiar and inviting. He prayed as if he saw heaven opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God, and when he preached he seemed to be delivering the answer to his own prayer. Mr. Whiteman's great ministry had many remarkable aspects and qualities even in its ordinary course, but at times, as on this evening, he looked and spoke like a man possessed of the Holy Ghost and standing between the living and the dead like a prophet of the Lord. On these transfiguration days it was of small consequence

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to Mr. Whiteman who was present, or on what pretence.

The effect upon Miss Gray was entirely unlooked for, and probably less looked for by herself than by any one else. The effect was as though an unknown kinship had suddenly disclosed itself, and adduced credentials which it was impossible to dispute.

"Papa," said she, in a tone the Vicar never heard before, "what is faith? What is the Spirit of God? What is the spiritual world? Mr. Whiteman spoke about them as if he knew all about them, and it was so grand, so solemn, papa, so——"

"Don't distress yourself about these things, my child," said the Vicar; "read the articles and the homilies you know, and I will order the trap for a run over to Broxham; an afternoon with Sir Headley, you know: yes, yes, calm yourself, my Lily."

"Papa, the place seemed to be full of spirits, and although Mr. Whiteman is blind, he seemed to see them, and he was not the least morsel afraid. I thought him an angel."

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"Just so, dear, just so. I understand it all. The trap will be round at two."

"Papa, dear, do you think I am an invalid?"

"Not at all, Lily, not for a moment. Better see Mr. Bonas."

"Oh no, papa; his words have no music in them, no soul, no fire——"

"Perhaps not, dear, but Mr. Bonas has quite a wonderful knowledge of the middle ages."

"And what have we to do with the middle ages?"

"Nothing in the world, my dear, nothing. That's just where it is. Now settle down."

"Papa, what are spirits? What is the spirit-world? Oh, papa, what is God?"

"Exactly, love, exactly. It was rather thoughtless of Mr. Runch to take you. I must see Runch. Yes. I will see Runch almost immediately. Exactly."

"What do you want to see Mr. Runch about, papa?"

"To get the particulars, dear; merely that; when I get the particulars, you know——"

"What particulars, papa?"

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"Everything about it, you know, my dear; now calm yourself," then aside—"Her mother was very excitable; once thought she was an angel; never would calm herself properly; used to call me flippant," then to Lily—"You'll soon be better, dear. I ought to have opposed your going——"

"Going where, papa?"

"Going to the Dissenters, dear; you have not been used to excitement——"

"But, papa, that is where you make a mistake; there was not the very least excitement——"

"Just so, Lily: you don't quite understand. No man can be a Dissenter without being excited: it may be well kept down, but it is still there; if it were not there, the man could not be a Dissenter."

"If Mr. Whiteman is a Dissenter, I should like to be one, papa."

"Oh, my dear! Of course I know what you mean. I will see Mr. Runch, and we must calmly await events."

When the Vicar returned home he found that the "particulars" furnished by Mr. Runch did not assist him to deal with

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the case of his daughter, but he did find that an old lady called Mrs. Lambert had inquired at the Vicarage how Miss Gray was after her visit to the Baptist chapel, and had offered to explain Baptist principles to that young lady whenever called upon to do so, and had left a small hand-bill announcing a course of afternoon addresses by the Baptised chimney-sweep, Mr. Robert Morby, entitled "The Glory Gate: how I found it, opened it, and shut it again," each address to be followed by a collection for the conversion of other sweeps of limited means and corrupt dispositions. Morby himself had left the profession in favour of younger men.

"Papa, what is the Glory Gate, do you suppose?"

"It is confounded stupidity and nonsense, Lily, and I will allow the matter to proceed no farther. I have got full particulars from Runch, and I am disgusted. I have made a mistake, Lily, in being too friendly with the Dissenters. What do people want? They can be baptised, confirmed, churched, married, and buried, and all in a lawful and becoming manner. What more can they possibly desire? Is

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not everything written down? I ought to have thought of that, and I ought to have been very much against your going to the Baptist chapel."

Miss Gray had seldom seen her genial father in this mood, but in this case the little touch of temper was perhaps useful in calling up her reserve of strength and courage, and by so much proving that the Vicar was quite in error in supposing that his daughter was either an invalid or a lunatic.

"Papa, you were really not in error at all, so you have no occasion to be excited. You have asked me to control myself, and if I ask you to do the same thing, it is only that I may ask you what all the fuss is about? I have seen and heard something new; I have asked a question or two as to the meaning of things; I believe that Mr. Whiteman knows more than a good many other people know; and I wish to inquire, and consider, and come to right conclusions. What harm is there?"

"Lily," said the Vicar, "you are right. Pardon my natural anxiety. You take a most sensible view. I was altogether

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wrong in my foolish fears. So you really liked Mr. Whiteman ?"

"O yes, papa. It was so touching to see his pretty ways, and when he came to preach you cannot imagine what beautiful words he used, or how glorious his face was in the middle of the prayer. I quite longed to ask him all about the sermon and to find out what he meant. As for Mr. Runch, I seriously believe he did not care for what was said ; indeed, I know he did not, for when we came out he said such a place as that would kill him in a month, and he thanked God that none of his ancestors were either Baptists or anything like it."

The Vicar secretly sided with Mr. Runch, but wisely said nothing. "You are quite yourself again now," he aggravatingly remarked ; "still I will have the trap round, and we can run over to Broxham for an hour. Everything will presently blow over. All these poor cripples will soon see that their game is not a paying one, and in a day or two, a week at the most, everything will be as if nothing had happened."

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## CHAPTER X.

TOMLINSON "jacked it all up," yet the stars quietly shone upon the earth as if nothing had happened. What the stars felt inwardly no man can tell, but outwardly there was no sign of emotion. I must be just enough to the Church of England to say that priestly illegitimacy cannot impose upon her. The serene old mother knows her own children, but when she looks upon converted Dissenters, there is an undoubted expression of suspicion in in her motherly eyes. Such Dissenters, exceptions being granted, generally want to borrow something which they cannot repay; it may be only a character, or a patent of respectability, or so worldly a boon as a "living;" but the want is always on their side rather than on the side of the Church. Tomlinson wanted a good deal, and got nothing. When I last saw him he was chaplain of a cemetery, and in

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bitter controversy with the "scurvy Dissenter" who had official charge of the "unconsecrated" ground. To that lucrative office, yielding a little over a pound a week, Tomlinson had been promoted, so perhaps it is hardly exact to say that he got nothing by the change. He thought that as a preacher he would take the benighted Establishment by storm; but so boisterous was his manner that when he first preached in a parish pulpit he drove two of the churchwardens insane, and so excited the beadle as to make that quiet functionary a nuisance to the domestic hearth. Nor did Tomlinson regret this as a humane preacher ought to have done; on the contrary, he said that all this upset was the sure omen of "a gracious revival," and that if it could be kept up in active force for a month, a wonderful transformation would take place in the parish. This was no doubt true, but the parish declined to be transformed; indeed, the beadle went so far as to intimate to a brother officer that in knocking down a man like Tomlinson, any man worthy of the name might find a good deal of honest satisfaction. Tomlinson created quite a panic in the

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parish. Some were thunderstruck, some thought that judgment was nigh at hand, others considered it unlucky to see such a man prowling in the town, and one ardent soul called the attention of the Bishop to the havoc with which the parish was threatened. Thus Tomlinson was disappointed, and began to feel that even in the Church of England the most distinguished genius may basely go without recognition.

"Call this a national church!" said he; "then where am I?" That was a solemn poser, and, in fact, a poser that never was answered. The sexton was so "paralysed" by what he called this "bull of Bashan," that he would not follow Tomlinson into the vestry to do the customary offices, "for," as he admitted to a fellow bootmaker in the town, "I was so chawed up and blistered all over that I did not know what the deuce so passionate a little demon might do if he got me into a corner." The sexton was not the man to stand upon the purity of a metaphor, or to reject a forbidden word when it exactly expressed the feeling of the moment, and therefore I hope that this quotation will not be so

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narrowly or maliciously interpreted as to do the sexton any harm either in the family or in business. For want of outdoor exercise a boot-maker must often be driven out of the monotony of propriety into the confidential use of energetic terms, and I consider that in such a case large consideration should be given to extenuating circumstances. The simple fact is that the parish was afraid of Tomlinson ; he was so infinite in his own esteem, so hideously pompous in his rotundity and his feeble waddle, and so raving mad in the pulpit, that not a shopkeeper in the parish would open an account with him. And even at home poor Tomlinson's lot was hard, for his wife had not been reconverted to the Church, but remained an incorrigible and hard-mouthed renegade.

"What has your fine church done for you ?" she said to Tomlinson in a tone whose aggravation was perfect.

"My dear," said he, "patience, patience."

"Fiddlesticks !" his wife replied ; patience has worn me to a bone."

"Talent will be recognised in the long

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run," Tomlinson added; "the Church of England needs preaching power; rich in theology and brilliant in tradition, she yet needs——"

"It is quite clear she does not need you," Mrs. Tomlinson interrupted, with bitter emphasis on the last word.

"My turn will come, dear."

"Yes, on the day of judgment all our turns will likely come."

"Before that, love," Tomlinson meekly added; "any post may bring me a letter from the Bishop; think of that, dear, not from a purse-proud deacon, but from the Bishop!"

"I am expecting a letter from the Bishop myself," said Mrs. Tomlinson, "a letter to tell you to pack up and be off!"

"My dear!"

"Why not?" Mrs. Tomlinson inquired.

Perhaps Mrs. Tomlinson was embittered by the recollection of an interview with Mrs. Bell, the churchwarden's wife, a lady whose excellence of motive was always pleaded in extenuation of a frankness which was wont to take no account of human feeling.

"Can you not, dear, persuade Mr. Tom-

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linson to take a little something just to tame him down before he goes to church? I think the chemist could do something up for him that would hold him in, dear, and slightly tame him down, for really it is intolerable, and Mr. Bell says that no bull could make such a noise if all the dogs in the town came upon him in a pack. Mr. Bell is quite serious."

"Then you object to earnest preaching?" Mrs. Tomlinson inquired.

"Gracious me!" said Mrs. Bell; "earnest preaching! Whatever do you mean? I object to earnest braying, dear, and earnest bellowing, and earnest roaring; you, know, dear, the church is not a zoological gardens, or even a travelling menagerie; now I daresay Mr. Tomlinson was quite a shining light among the Dissenters——"

Mrs. Tomlinson stood aghast at this allusion, for her reverend husband had done his best to conceal the fact that he had ever been associated with that partially disreputable body, and by cultivating a drawl and a haw-haw had supposed that he might pass for an Oxford man, double first-class and Fellow of a college. But



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there is a spirit in man, and even country parishioners have not been excluded from the inspiration of the Almighty.

"How do you know what Mr. Tomlinson would be amongst the Dissenters?"

"Only what my housemaid tells me, dear."

"Your housemaid?"

"Yes, dear. She used to be in the service of Miss Beebee, of the Green Hollows, and she has told me what Miss Beebee thought of your husband's preaching, and how kind Miss Beebee was to you all, and of course we wish to be kind, and all we want is to tame him down a little, quiet his nerves a trifle, and soothe him somehow."

"My husband is a revivalist," said Mrs. Tomlinson, in a tone of indefinite pride.

"Possibly so, dear, and that is exactly what we do not require in this old-fashioned parish. Very few of us are deaf, it is astonishing how few. And if you will not think me rude, dear, I should like to say that if Mr. Tomlinson wishes to secure promotion in the Church, he must drop a good many of his Dissenting ways."

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"And pray what may those be, Mrs. Bell?"

"Well, dear, he drops in rather too often at lunch time, or tea time, or dinner time, as the case may be, and Dissenters have wonderful appetites, and there's poor Mrs. Adamson, the widow on the hill, says that she has hardly time to begin her tea when, to her horror, she finds that Mr. Tomlinson has gobbled all up, and looks at her quite reproachfully."

"Then why does she ask him to tea?"

"She does not, dear; Mr. Tomlinson stops without asking. My housemaid tells me that Dissenters are very fond of tea; they have been mostly brought up on tea; they often have meetings for the purpose of shaking hands and drinking tea; she says the ministers are the worst of all, and that Mr. Tomlinson has been known in his Dissenting days to drink, at a meeting, eighteen cups of tea!"

"Do not believe all you hear, Mrs. Bell."

"Quite right, dear, but I don't care how much tea the good creature drinks—for Mr. Bell is the largest tea-dealer in the district—if we can only tame him down a

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little, and bring him within the limits of a Christian gentleman and clergyman."

A conversation of this kind might well account for the strong tincture of bitterness in the remarks which Mrs. Tomlinson addressed to her husband, a bitterness which Tomlinson hastened to counteract by an announcement which seemed to have in it the promise of money and comfort.

"I have a pleasant surprise for you, my dear. A young colonist, whose education has been wholly neglected, has advertised for board and lodging in the family of a clergyman. See? in the family of a clergyman, not in the family of a Dissenting minister: these are the incidental advantages of my new position: never overlook incidental advantages. Well, this young colonist is coming. For a time he will put up at the inn, and as soon as possible we must make a boarder of him. There is no lack of money, as well as no lack of ignorance."

Mr. Tomlinson having said this, stroked his chin, adjusted his spectacles, and in calling his wife by her Christian name he

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threw into the word "Fanny" an emotion only to be accounted for by the brightest prospects of success.

The young colonist was a strapper, considerably over six feet high, yellowy-brown in complexion, and altogether about the most muscular lion's cub that has ever been seen out of a show. There was decided character about him at every point, but most of all in his deeply cavernous mouth, large enough not only to swallow Mrs. Adamson's tea and toast, but the widow, and table and everything on it. His impossible clothing must be left to the imagination, for its amplitude, its independence of the human figure, and its impartial amalgamation of colours, cannot be adequately described in words.

"Is Nehemiah anywheres handy?" said he, soon after making Mr. Tomlinson's acquaintance.

"Still in the old place," said Tomlinson, entering into the humour of the enquiry.

"Guessed as much. The mother country ain't big, so I thought Nehemiah might be round here snug and handy. Perhaps you can fetch him to-night for a chew and a mug."

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"Surely I must misunderstand you," said Tomlinson. "I thought you were inquiring about an Old Testament saint who bore the name of Nehemiah."

"A sorter clergyman, I guess you mean. No. I mean Battison, whiskey slogger, a man who could drink a mill-dam dry if it ran the real stingo. But I say, boss, you ain't a real clergyman, are you? I mean the genu*ine* sort, you know."

"Certainly I am," said Tomlinson; "what makes you think the contrary?"

"Are you a downright gamecock with a pedigree?"

Mr. Tomlinson did not like the inquiry, but could not wisely resent it. As he looked up to the ochre-coloured giant he felt that in point of size he was the smallest of bantams. He never felt so small before.

"You know," said the giant, "in the colony we should be rather like eating you slap off at breakfast and washing you down with some sort of muddled water, you are so fat and comfortable. You can't be much short of two hundred and fifty, I reckon by the eye."

"Two hundred and fifty what?" Tomlinson inquired. "Not years, I hope."

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"I guess you weigh two hundred and fifty; now own up; don't you?"

"These are private matters," said Tomlinson, adopting a severe manner.

"But what was you about as a child not to grow yourself a pair of longer pins? You don't show up well in inches. You cannot be more than a yard-and-a-half, eh?"

"Such subjects are not discussed by gentlemen in our relation."

"But, boss, you ain't humbugging me about your being a genu*ine* clergyman? You ain't the man to put a paper collar on and make-believe it's linen? You ain't the man to stuff yourself out with a pillow-case and make believe it's real human nature? I guess you won't try to play off on a genu*ine* colonist?"

"Certainly not," said Tomlinson. "I am as good as a bishop as far as I go."

"You don't look it, boss; you have a fed-up look; you seem to have been put together by a baker and butcher: boss, you muddle me."

Mr. Tomlinson could have returned the compliment, but hirelings must be silent.

"I guess I'll advertise through my

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agent again," said the giant. "I don't feel as you are genu*ine*. A clergyman has no business to be fat; he ought to be more skin and bone; it don't seem to me, as a genu*ine* colonist, that God Almighty wants outdoor servants quite so heavy as two hundred and fifty, or quite so short as a yard-and-a-half. You don't look handy. You are a sorter squashy man. Something inside tells me you are not genu*ine*."

Mr. Tomlinson could have borne a good deal of insult in view of the terms which had been arranged in the course of correspondence, but it is due to him to say that on seeing the giant and hearing him, and especially feeling the iron grip of his comprehensive hand, he got quite a new view of the uncertainty of human life, and piously resigned himself to a new disappointment. Incidental advantages are sometimes illusory.

The next Sunday was an awful time in the parish church. Mrs. Bell fainted at the end of the first explosion, and was carried out exclaiming "Do tame him down if you possibly can." The beadle,

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like a thirsty David, refreshed himself with a draught of communion wine, and both the churchwardens went straight home without saying one word. Tomlinson swelled and raged, and hammered the pulpit with malicious fury, and altogether acted with violent effect the part of a pious maniac. Parish churches were not built for noise. They do not respond to declamation. They will bear any amount of massive eloquence, delivered with harmonious dignity and well-handled passion, but they coldly disown all rant and din and wildness.

"Well," said Mrs. Tomlinson to her exhausted pastor and husband, "you have succeeded admirably in making a fool of yourself."

"In what way, Fanny ?"

"In mouthing and bellowing, in shouting as if you meant your old congregation at Green Hollows to hear you, in every way."

"You don't understand me, Fanny ; you really don't. The Church of England needs first-class preaching, impassioned oratory, and vivid dramatism. What

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would you have me do ? Would you have me go back to the Dissenters ?"

"I would, but they wouldn't," said Mrs. Tomlinson very tartly.

Then Tomlinson had not found heaven in finding the Church ? No. He had found nothing of the kind. Few such changes are happy in their consequences either on one side or the other. Clergymen are born, and Dissenting ministers descend from generation to generation, and it would seem to be impossible for them to unite to the extent at least of amalgamation. It will be something when the ecclesiastical Rhine and Moselle find a point at which they can roll in a common channel, but to the end they will show to close observers which is which. Tomlinson did the utmost in his power to put off the Dissenting old man with his deeds, but the Ethiopian could not change his skin. He practised all sorts of voices in private, now like a supposed bishop, now a dean, now a squirely archdeacon, and once—for truth must be stated at all hazards—once Tomlinson tried to speak in the tones of

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an imaginary archbishop. That experiment was very memorable from a dramatic point of view; Tomlinson had put on his surplice in his bedroom; one or two black ribbons belonging to his wife had been cunningly arranged over his bulky shoulders; a prayer-book was open in his hands, and he himself, an unmitred but expectant Grace, say His Grace of Canterbury, stood in front of the looking-glass, and extended his forefinger towards an imaginary cathedral crowded with eager auditors, who, at infinite personal inconvenience, had assembled to hear the prince of orators. The crisis had reached the point of agony, when a voice keen with impatience and anger exclaimed—

"Mrs. Bell wants you; go down to her, you greasy imbecile!"

These were not proper words to address to an ordinary parish priest, and certainly not to an archbishop, and perhaps under no conceivable circumstances was it proper for a wife to use them to her husband.

"Oh, Mr. Tomlinson, if you cannot be tamed down a little, you really ought to

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go back to the Dissenters. Now the Methodists, say: would they not like to get hold of an open-air preacher?"

"Do you suppose, Mrs. Bell, that I have the honour of being an open-air preacher?"

"Certainly I do, and, in fact, it is too small a place for you. I think you ought to try the sea; then there would be a pair of you. But I called to say that the chemist has made something up for you——"

"Madam! what may your mysterious meaning be?"

"To quiet the nerves, you know. No harm in it. A child might take it for that matter. The chemist says it is wonderful for taming——"

"Madam! Do you suppose you are talking to a wild beast?"

"Not in private, Mr. Tomlinson. The mixture is not made for you in your private capacity. I was very particular to explain that to the chemist. It is just to operate in the pulpit when the fit comes on——"

"And what fit is that, madam?"

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"I really don't know what the name of it is, Mr. Tomlinson. There are so many fits. The chemist said something about epileptic; but I don't go so far as that myself, for Mr. Bell has an uncle afflicted in that way, and I must say he was worse than you are, because he foamed at the mouth a good deal more, though he did not stand out quite so much at the eyes; but you both clutch at the air about alike. I thought, perhaps, that you would tame down a little——"

"Madam, I have no wish to be rude; but I must protest against the word 'tame.' It savours of a wild beast; it suggests tigers and leopards; it disturbs the imagination by visions of iron cages, and red-hot bars, and chains——"

"Oh dear, Mr. Tomlinson, how can you think of such awful things?"

"How can you think of them, Mrs. Bell?"

"I don't, Mr. Tomlinson. I am only going by what my housemaid tells me. She says that when you were the Independent minister at Green Hollows——"

Mr. Tomlinson started, for Mrs. Tom-

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linson had not told him about the housemaid."

"She says you sometimes became black in the face, and that many of the elderly people were quite glad when you went away, you made them so nervous, and even Miss Beebee often turned white and looked uncomfortable."

Then Mr. Tomlinson had not found heaven in finding the church? Human nature is much the same in all ecclesiastical conditions, as Mr. Tomlinson found to his great discomfort. Men cannot so easily bury their dead selves, whatever the poets may say. Some man, great or small, some mistress or maid, brings back the past and forces it, all the more sometimes that the act is unintentional, upon the reluctant attention of the self that was supposed to be dead. The most annoying circumstance connected with the unlamented secession of such men as Tomlinson is that they are supposed by ignorant persons to represent the better class of Nonconformist ministers! They are the good men who, having repented of their

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wickedness, have confirmed their penitence by self-sacrificing withdrawal from the schismatics; and bishops rejoice over them, and account them as the first-fruits of harvest! Nor does the mischief end here. Tomlinson not only withdraws; he presumes to report to the other side the vulgarity of the mob he has left. He could not stand it. He was being debased by it. It had a dwarfing effect upon his mind. Thus he makes the air dark with lies, yet fails to make himself a gentleman. But what about Mr. Tomlinson's "political wisdom"? Did he enjoy Miss Beebee's property and so become a really, because a financially, independent minister? When that benevolent lady departed this life, events did not disclose themselves in Mr. Tomlinson's favour. Miss Beebee's mind was not marked by that peculiar kind of comprehensiveness which obliterates all distinctions and includes in a common benediction the left hand and the right. Miss Beebee loved some things and hated others, and amongst the things she honestly detested was the principle of the State establishment of religion. How far she had mastered the philosophy of

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that principle it is now too late to inquire, but we may hope that our ignorance in no way impairs her happiness. It is almost certain that her narrowness was inspired by prejudice, and was in no degree amended by a liberal desire to know what *could* be said on the other side. Be that as it may, she visited Mr. Tomlinson's secession with penalties. The whole of her property, with the exception of one thousand pounds devised to my friend Paterson, she gave and bequeathed to Professor Stokoe, who, on learning his good fortune, gurgled something about an experiment which he was about to make by placing water drawn from the Great Geyser of Iceland in an evaporating basin. So much for bachelor philosophers coming into unexpected tune !

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## CHAPTER XI.

THE Rev. Edwin Bonas, man of the automaton coat, has undertaken to pacify Miss Gray and show her the sinfulness of having even once attended the ministry of a Baptist heretic. He was, indeed, so interested in the case that he deferred his intention for one week of going into the Retreat for exercises of penance. Mr. Bonas had reduced all human repentance and obedience within a circle of directions sold for the modest sum of one penny; so all he had to do when any new case of rebellion or schism arose was to put up his eye-glass and scan the inexpensive pages. When an incipient schismatic ventured even to inquire what Nonconformity was, he was sacerdotally commanded to take a glass of water when he was very thirsty and to put it down again just as it touched his lips; and if it was feminine heresy, the offender was to dress herself



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for walking, and, as soon as she was quite ready to go out, to put off her things, dust as many prayer books as she could find, and pinch her arm until she could bear it no longer. Surely it is rather handy to have sin and penalty so exactly balanced, and everything neatly packed and labelled that is needful for chastisement and edification; at all events, it puts no strain upon ingenuity, and carries with it all the mystery and charm of anonymousness. In her then state of mind Miss Gray was more than willing to receive intelligent and healthy religious instruction: she was absolutely eager and hungry for it. There is a time in spiritual experience when it would seem as if one word would bring light and order and peace, if we could only find the voice powerful enough to say it. Voices of criticism are always audible: suggestions tending to the utter destruction of all faith are making tumult enough: but the voice that can give shape to shapelessness and stability to indecision and helplessness is often felt to be wanting. So the soul has to live on controversy or to submit to be thrown from one dissatisfaction to another by any empiric who

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cannot fear God because he idolises himself. We have been thrown upon an age of analysis and definition, and have left far behind the quiet and sober days when we were content to work in the light without taking the sun to pieces to see where the splendour came from.

"I remember," said Bonas, "the person you went to—to—see; I once encountered him—that is, in a distant sort of way—forget his name—I—I—remember another person with him—a person with boots—ya-as—person of the name of Paterson—"

"The Rev. Mr. Paterson, of Mixford?" Miss Gray inquired.

"No, no; by no means; not 'reverend,' I hope—not reverend—rawly!—the chief of a mob—not related to the Apostolic order."

"I believe he is a better man than many clergymen are," Miss Gray spiritedly if not argumentatively interposed.

"O, rawly! Very extraordinary! Our individual unworthiness—let me call your immediate attention to the twenty-sixth Article—special declaration——"

"A fig for Articles!"

"Rawly!"

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"You seem to think I have done wrong in going to hear——"

"To see," Mr. Bonas interrupted.

"To see and hear, not the minister you mean, but the Rev. Mr. Whiteman; is that so?"

"Ya-as. Rawly! Not reverend."

"Then what do you advise me to do?" Miss Gray put this inquiry with a humour which she admirably disguised.

"To make full and unfeigned confession."

"Will a sort of general confession be considered enough, Mr. Bonas? Consider yourself my ghostly adviser, and tell me. I am all attention."

"Rawly!"

"Well, now, please to proceed."

"Are you in that state of mind which is proper and needful?"

"I don't know. I have a good deal to confess, if I choose to. Won't a general confession be enough!"

"Not a general confession, certainly. Oh, no. Whatever is said in confession, you must remember, is said under seal. If you mention anything against parents or against the dearest friend you have on

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earth, I will, if you so desire it, celebrate for their conversion or their humbling and purifying of heart. We must be united in confession. Let me give you an example from the notes of a young woman, whose confession I received in church this morning; of course the name is hidden with me: 'Since my last confession, which was on the 10th of the present month, I have been too hasty in my morning prayers; once I did not get up in time; once I spent too much time in dressing, and as this was on a Friday morning, I deeply feel the sinfulness of the act. I once spoke sarcastically of a priest who did not please my vain and foolish taste in the way in which he preached his sermon. Five times I have thought of worldly things in church. I have twice answered my father disrespectfully. I have felt too much interest in a young man who attends a Dissenting meeting-house and keeps the post-office; when I have gone to the post-office for stamps he has spoken to me, and I have been foolishly pleased. Once I told an untruth. Twice I said yes when I ought to have said no; and once, on a Friday, I

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kept persons waiting because I was so long in dressing, and on that same Friday I quite forgot to make any difference in my meals.' That is the true way to confess. The soul thus throws off its burden, and receives absolution."

Miss Gray was silent, and there was a troubled expression on her pale face.

"We must not stumble at the word absolution. We must accept it. The power of absolution was given to us in our ordination, when we received the Holy Ghost. And if you will read the history of godly and sainted men, who were the very glory of the Church of England, you will see that the most illustrious Anglican Catholics went to the penance of confession. In 1625 King James I besought Bishop Williams to give him absolution. In 1710 Bishop Bull received absolution before his death. In 1650 Archbishop Williams showed what value he set upon confession and absolution: there was no regular presbyter to give him the sacrament, so the prelate purposely ordained an honest and pious

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servant of his own to administer to him in those holy offices. Amongst ladies who have observed this holy sacrament of confession and received the grace of absolution, I may mention Lady Rachel Russell, who confessed to Dr. Fitzwilliam every month; Elizabeth Lady Capel, who died in 1660; Sibylla Lady Anderson, who was absolved the day before her death in 1661; and the wife of Bishop Wilson, who died in 1705; the Bishop, in enumerating God's mercies to her, specially mentions the ministry of absolution. So you see, Miss Gray, I am asking you to unite yourself with a holy band who, notwithstanding the disturbances of the Reformation, have maintained the true faith and practice of the Catholic Church of England."

Miss Gray made no attempt to conceal her amazement at the wonderful change which had come over Mr. Bonas as to his way of expressing himself. On other subjects, and in mixed company, he spoke briefly, with considerable hesitation, and in a mincing way. But now he was fluent, almost energetic, and never at a loss for

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an argument which from his point of view was convincing and final. Miss Gray now saw the real priest in his true character, and probably he considered her interest in his remarks as creating an opportunity for the display of still intenser earnestness, for with great solemnity he whispered a Gloria, and sighed—"Jesu, mercy!"

"You need have no difficulty," he presently continued, "on the ground of confidence, for the hundred and thirteenth Canon binds every priest receiving confession to absolute secrecy. I have transcribed the very words of the Canon: 'If any man confess his secret and hidden sins to the minister, for the unburdening of his conscience, and to receive spiritual consolation and ease of mind from him, we do straitly warn and admonish the said minister that he do not at any time reveal and make known to any person whatsoever any crime or offence so committed to his trust and secrecy (except they be such crimes as by the laws of this realm his own life may be called into question for receiving the same), under pain of irregularity.' This is one of the Canons of the

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Church, and we are solemnly bound by it." As Mr. Bonas dwelt upon these points the tears came into Miss Gray's eyes, but whether from bodily pain or spiritual excitement is not explained. The eager priest put his own construction upon the fact, and proceeded in a well-modulated voice accordingly: "Even Latimer and Ridley expressly approved confession, and Cranmer distinctly taught the doctrine and urged the practice in these words: 'God hath given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the authority to forgive sins, to the ministers of the Church. Wherefore let him that is a sinner go to one of them. Let him acknowledge and confess his sin, and pray him that, according to God's commandments, he will give him absolution, and comfort him with the word of grace and forgiveness of his sins. And when the minister doth so, then I ought steadfastly to believe that my sins are truly forgiven me in heaven.' Who, then, Miss Gray, are we that we should set aside the counsel of the most saintly and venerable elders of the Church?"

Miss Gray had no answer immediately ready. She could but sigh in a kind of

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troubled wonder, and add how difficult it was sometimes to know exactly what to do. "There are so many good people on all sides of a question," she said, "that one cannot tell which is right and which is wrong. Now, I daresay if Mr. Whiteman——"

"Oh, rawly!" Mr. Bonas interposed in his old tone.

"Was here, he could give another view of the subject, and papa does not approve it; but I do not wish to argue."

"Argument is useless, Miss Gray; I will not argue, it is presumptuous."

"I only wish to do what is right."

"Then follow my advice, Miss Gray. Immediately proceed to the blessed sacrament of confession, and the relief of mind which will follow will be unspeakably great; all fear of death will be taken away; the dark clouds will be dispelled, and you will be happy in God: happy if you live; happier still if you die."

"You have received confession from other ladies, I understand?"

"Only this morning, as I have told you. The notes I have read were received by me this very morning. Several ladies

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confess. The joy they experience is incredibly great."

"But I really don't know how to begin. I don't know what papa would say."

"No one can die for you, Miss Gray, so no one ought to stand in the way of holy duty."

"I do not know what to say."

"Many persons come to us in precisely that state of mind, and we feel it our duty to assist them by questions."

"Well, if you can help me in that way, it may overcome my difficulty."

Mr. Bonas stood up, clasped his hands, closed his eyes, and reverentially said a Gloria; and having followed this by the Veni Creator, he proceeded—

"Have you neglected public worship on Sundays?"

"No."

"As you will appear before the Judge on the great day, I beseech you to reconsider your answer."

"I have not done so."

"Have you regularly, faithfully, and invariably, when at home, attended your own parish church?"

"With one exception."

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"And that one exception you now confess and lament and contritely denounce?"

"Oh no. Quite the contrary."

Mr. Bonas was taken back by this refusal, but suddenly diverged to another line:

"Have you read novels at home on Sundays when you could have gone to church?"

"I have read novels on Sundays, but I am not aware that they ever kept me from going to church."

"Do you remember any special sins done by you on Sundays?"

"No; not at this moment."

"Have you gone to church on Ascension Day, Ash Wednesday, and Good Friday always, or have you used those days, or any other Fasts or Festivals, as mere gay holidays?"

"I have not paid much attention to those days."

"Do you mourn your neglect of such seasons with much self-condemnation?"

"No."

"Then I exhort you so to do, or else on the great day of account your soul will stand in jeopardy. Have you ever

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spoken sarcastically of a priest of the true church ?"

"I am afraid I have."

"This you do now hereby solemnly and penitentially confess ?"

"I acknowledge it."

"Try and remember the first falsehood you ever told, and inform me of the same in the sight of God."

"That is impossible."

"Can you remember your last wilful untruth ?"

"I am not aware that I was ever guilty of the meanness of telling a wilful untruth."

"Have you ever pretended to be ill for any unworthy reason ?"

"Mr. Bonas, how can you be so cruel ?"

"Have you ever betrayed a secret or broken a promise ?"

"I cannot remember having done so ; certainly not wilfully."

"Have you ever said or acted an untruth to obtain applause or produce merriment ?"

"That question I really cannot answer off hand."

"In what way does your pride chiefly show itself ?"

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"I do not know of any particular way."

"Do you always try and get before others impatiently in crowds?"

"Never."

"Do you often lie in bed longer than you need, and especially on Friday?"

"I have often done so."

"Did you study so hard as you should have done remembering that your education was paid for by your parents?"

"I did not."

"Are you very long dressing and undressing?"

"No."

"If a dinner is badly cooked, are you needlessly annoyed and needlessly angry with the servants?"

"Not needlessly angry."

"Are you annoyed because others are helped, and there is none left of any particular dish for yourself?"

"Don't you think these questions are rather frivolous, Mr. Bonas?"

"Oh no; they search the heart; they prove the conscience; they allow no escape."

"They seem to me to be silly."

"But they are not. They are specially

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needful for the children of the Church, who cannot be expected to have committed any great crimes. Your sins are almost sure to be minute, and even spiritual. Now, there is one subject upon which I must interrogate you in my official capacity—are you conscious that your desires are going forth in the direction of any heresy ?"

"Not at all."

"Are you conscious that any heretical person is getting an undue influence over you."

"Not for a moment."

"Have you been in secret confidential communication with any heretical person ?"

"Never."

"Would it give you distress of mind if any calamity befell a heretical person ?"

"Certainly it would."

"Ought we not to rejoice when Providence sends distress upon heretics ?"

"No, no ; that would be wrong."

"Can the Most Holy One do that which is wrong ? Pause, I beseech you."

"But the argument tells both ways."

"There is no argument, Miss Gray ;

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argument is vain, and irreligious, and useless."

Mr. Bonas, having apparently finished his interrogatories, every one of which he put without referring to a note, as if fully master of the process of examination, inquired whether Miss Gray now wished for the ministry and blessing of absolution ?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Bonas ; I hope you do not suppose I have made confession ?"

"Most undoubtedly I consider you have."

"Then let me undeceive you at once. I understand that you were only going to show me how a penitent is assisted by having questions put. I did not suppose you were putting the enquiries directly and seriously to myself. I was merely taking part in an explanation, after which I had to consider whether I would personally confess."

"This is a very serious error, Miss Gray. I fear you have trifled with holy things."

"Nothing of the kind, Mr. Bonas. You have trifled with them. You profess to be a minister of the Protestant Church, but if you have not been playing at Popery

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in all this questioning, then I do not know what Popery is. Please to understand me clearly. Perhaps I was wrong in drawing you on to make a fool of yourself, but I did want to see just how far you would go. I began in a mischievous humour, but I must end in a serious one. I cannot regard you as an honest man. In relation to you, I am as much a Dissenter as Mr. Whiteman is, and I glory in my Dissent. Your proper place is in the Romish Church. Go to it. Good-bye."

The Rev. Edwin Bonas thereafter left the Vicarage. The old gardener looked up as he thought he heard an unusual noise from a rook, but it was only the Rev. Edwin deeply uttering the favourite and expressive word, "Rawly!" as he passed into the shadows.

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## CHAPTER XII.

The Vicar was determined that I should see Sir Hedley Baker, without knowing whom, he assured me, I should be ignorant of one of the social aspects of church life. The Vicar fixed the time and the place and the mode of our little journey, and fixed everything with characteristic good taste and thoughtfulness.

The Vicar understood that I was to go on to Mixford, where I might possibly spend the night, but at all events I would not ride back with him. It was arranged that I was to be introduced to Sir Hedley Baker simply as the Vicar's friend, and that I was to hold my tongue upon all matters which exasperated the baronet. I was to treat him as a man suffering under many vexations, and to humour some of his eccentricities rather than oppose him. The Vicar assured me that

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Sir Hedley was a man of remarkable attainments, and that but for local circumstances of an irritating kind, to which the baronet could not fail to advert, he was about the gentlest and humanest creature in the whole country. "A very spirited old fellow, though, mind you, and has seen the day when he needed no friends but his own fists." I was curious to make my first acquaintance with a baronet of so long and good standing, and glad to stand just so much on one side as to escape the responsibility of leading or colouring the conversation. The atmosphere would be new to me, and very likely I should learn something. I am bound to admit that every man, every public man especially, is the better for being shaken out of his nest, and thrown into relations both novel and trying, and is all the wiser and stronger for hearing other people express their independent and ruling opinions. "You should have heard Barnet of Balliol and Sir Hedley talk, when circumstances were different, if you wanted an illustration of 'diamond cut diamond,' but now the baronet is suffering from a sort of monomania. Woa, mare. Here we are."

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A glance showed me that Sir Hedley was no common man. There was something in his handsome outline and impressive manner which marked him as a fine old English gentleman. His voice, too, so round and complete in every tone, asserted its owner's right to command as well as advise. The greeting of the friends was genuinely hearty, and my introduction was recognised by the kind old baronet with more than ordinary politeness. No Dissenter had ever received me with so fine a grace. By a very rapid mental process I compared Sir Hedley and Titus Noxey, and wondered if it was possible that the same Providence was responsible for them both. In a moment more I wondered how I should act with such a man as Sir Hedley as one of my deacons. In another moment I wondered if Sir Hedley suspected my connection with the Dissenting ministry. So the Dissenter always carries his chapel with him, and looks upon creation through a vestry window. Meanwhile the Vicar and the baronet were chatting about personal circumstances of which I knew nothing, and I was ostensibly admiring Broxham Grange and its lovely sur-

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roundings. Presently Sir Hedley turned upon me, and shaking his staff at things in general in the south-west, he said in an excited tone—

"That fellow, sir, is an impertinent scoundrel."

"I am a stranger, Sir Hedley," said I; "who is the person you mean?"

The baronet could hardly refrain from smiling as he became conscious that he was addressing an absolute stranger, but the smile was of the faintest kind. It was rather the grin of anger.

"Follow the line of my staff," said he, "and tell me what you see?"

"Do you mean through the opening of the trees, Sir Hedley?"

"Certainly."

"I see what looks like a new house, and men working on the roof."

"You are right, sir; that unwieldy, disproportionate, staring dog-kennel" (I started here, but kept my peace) "is hateful to me."

"Who is the owner of it?" I meekly inquired.

"Ask the mud under your feet, ask the

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mushrooms, ask the worms, but don't ask me ; don't ask any descendant of the Franvilles."

I was, perhaps, shamefully unacquainted with the Franvilles, though I can honestly say that I bore none of them any ill-will. Though they did not sit under my ministry, it is quite possible that they may have been respectably connected, and able to form intelligent opinions upon general subjects. As the Vicar had occasion to go to the stables to find a parcel in the dog-cart (I am not quite sure as to the exact designation of the curricle), I was thrown upon the baronet for what appeared to be quite a considerable number of minutes, which would have been burdensome to me but for his ability and willingness to keep up a vigorous monologue.

"Talk of gentlemen!" said he, though I had neither thought nor talked of anything of the kind; "I tell you, sir, no patent can be taken out for the manufacture of gentlemen; you cannot put in rags at one end of a machine and take them out at the other in the form of

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aristocracy; rattling money in your pocket does not make you gentlemen: money cannot turn mushrooms into oaks; money, sir, is a ladder, not a tree."

As we came upon a full view of the Grange, I expressed admiration.

"Feast your eyes upon it, and it will do them good after looking at yonder infernal brick-kiln. I'll give a thousand pounds to any charity in the county for every red brick you can find in Broxham Grange; and more than that—now be careful; your eyes are younger than mine—find me any stucco there, and I'll forfeit ten sovereigns for every square inch." To show that this was a *bonâ-fide* offer the worthy baronet waved his staff in the face of heaven.

"But," said I, with most culpable ignorance, and with my usual ill-luck in impromptu speech, "are not bricks as old as stone?"

The baronet plunged his staff into the spongy sward, and looking over it, he glared at me, but quickly subduing his

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contempt, he said—"A brick is a manufacture, and manufactures are insidiously impairing the dignity of the nation. The difference between a gentleman and an upstart is the difference between a rock and a brick. Keep bricks out of sight, use them for inferior purposes, but to put up a brick building yonder, sir, is not only to disfigure the landscape, but to insult the tradition of my family." After this speech I saw in imagination at least five hundred Franvilles turn over in their leaden coffins.

"I asked a very foolish question, I admit, Sir Hedley."

"Never mind," said he, putting his arm through mine in a friendly way; "my challenge is not done yet: find me anything but bricks and stucco in yonder villainous cart-shed, built with money probably made by pawnbroking or bird-stuffing, and I will build a church at my own expense, or a cathedral if you like, or a minster."

Smarting under the recollection of my unfortunate remark about the antiquity of bricks, I looked steadfastly and admiringly at the Grange.

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"Only a fragment of what it was, a mere fragment. When Rogerus de Franville, the favourite of the first Henry, lived here, it was at least three times its present size."

"Indeed!" said I, with a compassion which I felt to be painful, and even this I said with the timidity of a man who was tempted to speak a foreign tongue.

"Yes, sir, a fine fellow was Beauclerk, scholar as well as king. The tradition runs that he and Maud spent part of their honeymoon here."

The Vicar returned just as Sir Hedley said, "Egad, sir, if anybody had attempted to build a red-brick house yonder in those days, his neck would have suffered for it."

"Speaking about the Grange?" said the Vicar.

"I am. Every stone in this building is historical. I can prove by authentic documents that in the reign of Henry II —and you know well enough that Henry II did not reign yesterday—this place gave opposition to William of Scotland; and in the fourteenth year of King John,

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Roger de Franville gave up this very Grange—Broxham Grange—and his four sons, great stalwart fellows they were, brought up to digest steel and powder; can any pawnbroking, soap-boiling—pshaw!" and so the hot sentence was left unfinished.

Something within me rose against all this in strong resentment, and modified my first good impression of the baronet. I saw that even pedigrees and properties might become part of as pitiable a cant as was ever charged upon the peculiarities of Dissent, and that the main difference between some classes was that the one talked nonsense downstairs and the other talked nonsense two storeys higher up, but the quality of the nonsense was just the same, and the intellectual capacities of the talkers were about equal. I had no wish to dim by so much as one pale ray the ancient glory of this handful of old stones, or to disturb the comfort accruing to the baronet's mind from the legend that Henry Beauclerk spent part of his royal honeymoon at the Grange; yet, with all my timidity, I was strongly tempted to charge

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upon the vain old man after the fashion of a fearless Roundhead, and shatter his temporal security by some message from the eternal spheres. I was certainly beginning to feel much less uncomfortable as a Dissenter, and to feel also that Dissent is essential to the balance of power, or the social equipoise, in any country inhabited by a considerable number of Sir Hedley Bakers. Thus internally I was a bold hero, but outwardly a humble visitor.

"Some fine old faces there," said the Vicar to me, pointing to a long line of grotesque but expressive portraits; "no sign-post painting."

I admitted the unmistakable antiquity of the whole series.

"Look at that rich old painting in the corner," said Sir Hedley; "be deliberate, if you please; you cannot read all that is there in one glance."

"Who is it?" said I.

"What does that matter?" was the answer. "Does a king need a label round his neck? Say it is Mr. A. B., and instantly you say it is impossible. Your instincts rise against the plebeian sugges-

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tion. I want you to fix your mind upon the richness and force of character you see in every feature, and in the countenance as a whole. Why, sir, the blood of many royal generations seems to me to be in that compressed and ardent face. Were I to tell you that it is the portrait of a retired pawnbroker, you would justly accuse me of having lost my head. Were I to say this is the head of a gentleman who sold small wares in a country town, and made money enough to build himself a red-brick barn on the edge of an ancient estate, you would feel at once that the very canvas was giving me the lie. That is not a dough face, sir, put together and scooped out by a talented baker, and you know it. I am never tired of looking at the magnificent lion-like face of a king-maker."

"It is a rugged and noble face," said I, preferring a statement to an inquiry.

"The face of Sir Roger Franville, raised to the earldom by king Edward II immediately after the battle of Borough Bridge; and there is Franville Franville, son of the earl; and so you come on from soldier to soldier, and from statesman to statesman, until you reach this point,"

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indicating the same with his staff. "Now, sir, look at that face and tell me where you will match it to-day? There's an eye! There's a head! There's a mouth perfect in loveliness! And notice that right hand particularly—take time to it—why, sir, there is more refinement of character in any finger of that hand, than there is in the whole guild of manufacturers. I tell you I am proud when I look at that sweet face."

"May I ask whose face it is, Sir Hedley?" forgetting the danger of interrogation.

"I was just going to tell you. You must pardon the digressiveness of an old man who has been put on his mettle by an adventurer in bricks. At this point the male line of the Franvilles became extinct. This brilliant creature with the celestial face is Alianora Franville, who married Sir Hedley Baker, the tenth baronet, of Broxham, and you may infer the rest."

A period of agreeable silence followed this splutter of ancestral vanity, which gave me time to look meditatively at a few other pictures. The baronet aired

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himself at the door, with his head, as I thought, a little inclined towards the quarter which gave all his trouble. I was right in my impression, for on my coming towards him the baronet remarked :—

"You observe the position of affairs most distressingly from this point. Just between the parallel of plane trees we shall have a full view of his two stacks of chimneys ; from these chimneys there will of course be smoke—manufacturers' smoke, no doubt—black, suffocating smoke ; when my county friends ask me, as most naturally they will, where that smoke comes from, what answer am I to make ?"

"I should just tell the plain truth," said I, with Dissenting bluffness.

"And pray what is the truth, sir ? You answer me very curtly, but a moment's reflection will show that you answer more curtly than wisely. Who can say what the truth really is in such a case ? Who can tell the painful history of this man's money ? Who knows whether it is his own, or borrowed capital ? And supposing it is his own, who can tell how long it may be his ? These fellows get into fine flare-

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up carriages one day, and go through the bankruptcy court the next; they come from nothing, and go back to nothing; and in their passage to and fro they give infinite annoyance to the old families of the country."

I suggested that perhaps some good influence might be brought to bear upon the man who was putting up the building, and that practical men might be able to abate the nuisance arising from the nearness of the chimneys. I knew that I had nothing definite to propose, yet I wanted to move in the direction of concession and harmony, and to bring Sir Hedley's better nature into play.

"Now," said I, in a tone not so morally strong as it ought to have been, "could not some clergyman mediate in such a case? Could not the Vicar of Mixford bring you together to some extent?" (then looking at Mr. Gray) "the clergy have great influence with all classes, and can often interpose without giving offence."

"Well, sir," the baronet replied, "under

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ordinary circumstances your view would have been correct. I admit that. If you will not misunderstand me, I will say that such a view would have occurred to almost anybody. But the circumstances are preposterously extraordinary. Let me tell you, to your amazement perhaps, that this retired pawnbroker, if he ever was anything so respectable, has not an ounce of religion in body or soul! Now what do you say?"

"That gives a new complexion to the case, I admit."

"I should think you do admit," said the baronet, with a slur of scorn; "the fellow is a Dissenter; now what becomes of your easy plan? The fellow never enters a church; the fellow has no more fear of God before his eyes than that painted beagle has; if ever, which God forbid, you have anything to do with Dissenters" (the Vicar turned right round to admire the beagle so suddenly brought into the conversation) "you will find that a more pig-headed set of half-washed ignoramuses never attempted to upset the throne of England. I do not hesitate to describe them as atheists of the very worst type.

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Without wishing to use strong language respecting them, I may say that if you want to send this country to the devil, you have only to encourage the spread of Dissent."

And this raving, bouncing baronet was one of the "gentlemen" of England! This was the kind of critic that blended Dissent and atheism, and accounted them as equivalent terms! This was the furious assailant of principles avowed by Bunyan and Defoe, Owen and Howe, Milton and Locke! In my heart I knew he was a fool, and in my heart I despised alike his fury and his grandeur.

It will not be wondered at that in every way consistent with courtesy I brought my visit to a close, and hastened to Paterson's house at Mixford to keep an appointment I had made with him. The Vicar accompanied me to the Grange gate, and by his marvellously comical expression of face as he bade me good-bye did more to give me his confidence and make a friend of me than could have been done by eager



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protestations and studied hospitalities. Surely, after all, it is good for a man to know exactly what other men think of him and his most serious convictions, and good to have another window knocked through the blank wall of his self-enclosure, even with some suddenness and violence, if through the opening he can be made to see something of the real size and colour of things. When I hear that a nice family has taken a pew in my chapel, and that two working men have taken shilling sittings in the gallery, I mentally conclude that Nonconformity is making rapid strides, and that Independency is a chosen instrument in the hands of Providence for working out the regeneration of the land. Six feet more Nonconformist pewing let at five shillings a quarter! The act is full of promise for Dissent and full of hope for the devoted young carpenters who are called to make their living by the ministry. But one visit to Broxham Grange showed me that the habitations of the wicked are full of cruelty—towards what they regard as amateur parsondom and private church theatricals.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

"Good morning, Mr. Robson," said I, as the good Baptist deacon unexpectedly appeared at my study door. "I have just been wondering how it is that 'Church people' regard Dissenters as vulgar and unintelligent, and look upon us generally as a kind of social refuse. Can you account for it?"

"Not worth accounting for, my dear sir. Yet the subject is rather timely, after all, for I have just had a visit from Mr. Runch, the churchwarden, who seems to have got himself into a good deal of trouble by the visit he paid to our chapel. By the way, is Runch the kind of 'gentleman' they admire so much? Is he the pattern they want us to copy?"

"I suppose so," said I.

"Then I for one must decline," Mr. Robson continued, "for a more deplorable

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case of ignorance I do not remember to have noticed for many years."

"But, my dear Mr. Robson," I interrupted, "he is a Churchman, and I understand that to be a Churchman is to be a gentleman; information goes for nothing, refinement of feeling goes for nothing, benevolent interest in the welfare of others goes for nothing; Churchmanship is everything; Dissent alone is the unpardonable sin."

Mr. Robson was amused at my change of tone, for I had always been looked upon as a somewhat tepid Dissenter, quietly going on with my own pastoral work and leaving the Church of England alone. I acknowledge that my Dissent was not of the Paterson type, that, indeed, I was rather afraid of Patersonism, and that if anything my Dissent erred on the side of indifference. At the same time, I could not have patience with the spirit or policy of such a man as Tomlinson—a man without convictions, and utterly without nobleness or unselfishness of impulse. But recent events had thrown a new light upon things, and had constrained me to obey the

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instincts of self-respect. I found that throughout the town it was felt that a wonderful favour had been conferred upon the Baptist chapel by the visit of Miss Gray and Mr. Runch ! Think of anybody in Midtown being able to patronise the glorious Whiteman ! Yet this was the undoubted feeling on the part of many. I heard, too, that other distinguished tradesmen were thinking of venturing into the Baptist chapel now that Mr. Runch had led the way and made it in some degree respectable, and even the bellman had said he " would not much mind giving the Baptists a turn some night now that Mr. Runch had taken them by the hand !" This was more than I could stand. Now and again I had been touched to the quick by a sudden rememberance of the heroic side of historic Dissent, but the emotion would subside with equal suddenness, and once more I would easily glide into the level of good fellowship and non-controversial relations with the Vicar. Now all was changed. The depressing truth forced itself upon my attention that Dissent always involves social penalties in one form or another, and that every Dissenter must either attemper

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his convictions by his circumstances or counterbalance the penalty by the approval of a good conscience. It is quite true that the sense of penalty may not be so acute in large towns as in rural districts, but that is only the result of social complexity, and in no degree due to an alteration of central faith. Some compromising Dissenters have mildly attempted to bridge the gulf ecclesiastical by deferential tailoring, the invention of toy liturgies, and resolutions in favour of building chapels with steeples, but the expensiveness of the candle has ruined the profit of the game, and so it must ever be to the weary end. Compromise is impossible, because the contradiction is in things eternal, and not merely in the accidents of an hour.

"I have called to tell you," Mr. Robson continued, "that a very singular circumstance has occurred, arising out of the matter you have referred to. Miss Gray has had an interview with Mr. Whiteman, and Mr. Whiteman wants to see you at four o'clock about it. The matter is altogether very delicate, yet it is most deeply interesting. See Mr. Whiteman as soon

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after four as you can, and let him have the benefit of your opinion."

What was Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba? Nothing. Plainly, simply, absolutely nothing. Yet I wondered, with no small excitement, why the interview had been sought, and what course it had taken, and what issues it had affected. In the metropolis the incident would have come and gone without commotion, but in Midtown it created an epoch, and needed consummate handling in order to prevent it creating a disaster. The rain makes more noise in a bucket than it makes on the sea. That day I could do next to nothing in the study, though I had planned to write full sixteen pages of solid quarto before retiring to rest. Four o'clock would never come. I was convinced that my watch had stopped. So I shook its creaking machinery, but without finding that I had any power over the sun. I took a look at my "Daniel in the lions' den," not without a thought that my trial was in some respects the greater of the two. There are no lions' dens now-a-days, else life would be worth living, and a man

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would have something to get up for in the morning. But these little troubles, little pinchings, little teasings, who can bear them? They are too small for prayer, and too minute for sympathy. Yet there they are, contemptible enough singly, but quite a cloud when they come together. I quite feel that I underwent an unappreciated martyrdom that day as I wearily waited for four o'clock. At length patience had its perfect work, for Whiteman withheld nothing from me of all the unexpected but not unhappy interview. It appeared that Miss Gray had made a call upon Mrs. Whiteman, frankly avowing that her purpose was to ask Mr. Whiteman some questions about the sermon she had heard and about the chapel she had been to, and Mrs. Whiteman gladly encouraged the simple desire. Mrs. Whiteman was well aware that her brilliant husband often said things which she herself could not distinctly follow, so she did not wonder that strangers should be at a loss to take in his whole meaning at one hearing. Mrs. Whiteman was quite right. Mr. Whiteman probably never preached a sermon that was complete in itself; there

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was at least an atmosphere of reference to other and inexpressible things, and a breathing as from eternal mysteries pervading the entire service. Mr. Whiteman himself was but part of a larger personality. What wonder, then, if a young stranger had been almost dazed by the new glory which had fallen upon her spiritual vision? Happily I was able so to collect the particulars, and understand the spirit of the interview, as to qualify myself to give a full note of what transpired.

Nellie was, of course, with her father, as usual, having, in fact, become quite indispensable to him. Nellie was one of those children so soft in manner, so boldly timid, so healthily sensitive, as never to be in the way, yet never out of it. No one felt that she was a third party in an interview; she was simply part of her father—the part which completed his life and gave the charm of grace to the strength of his dignity. Miss Gray was soon made to feel that if the minister was blind, his daughter could see. How Nellie looked at her! How tenderly! How

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wistfully! Why? The simplicity of Miss Gray's dress could not have long detained her attention, for what is there in a plain stuff dress and a bonnet without a feather? Nor could personal beauty have explained the lingering and contented look, for Miss Gray was as one of a thousand, simple, pleasant, unpretending, and quite wanting in conspicuousness. Why, then Nellie's undisguised but unobtrusive interest? All the time she was saying to herself—"The Vicar's a sweet old thing, so his daughter is sure to be good." It will thus be seen that though Nellie was wanting in variety of expression, she was by no means inconstant in feeling. Miss Gray was able by sympathy to understand the look, and to endure it without annoyance, and, indeed, to feel that Nellie was a necessary link between her and the blind man whose serene face was even nobler in private than she had admitted it to be in public. Preliminaries were soon over, and earnest talk was unrestrained.

"I found, do you know, Mr. Whiteman, that when I left your chapel, I had been quite in a new world, where everything

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was strange, and where I could not altogether make out what was going on."

"Then you had never been in a Nonconformist chapel before?"

"Never! Oh dear no. It was perhaps very silly of me, but I did not know exactly what you are, and I expected to be amused, and I thought you would be pulling the Church of England to pieces, and I had all sorts of queer ideas."

"You have changed your opinion then?"

"I have indeed. Oh, Mr. Whiteman, how is it possible for you to pray as you prayed that evening?"

"Nonconformists pray as they are moved by the Holy Spirit. They do not compose their prayers, or commit them to memory, or repeat the prayers of others; they solemnly consider the sacred character of the exercise, and then use the language of the moment."

"Well, I cannot understand it. Do all Nonconformists pray like you?"

"Yes, in substance. Every man, of course, has his own manner and scope of expression. Some are more fervent than others. Some of the most fervent and pathetic prayers I have ever heard have

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been offered by Methodist ministers. Many of the Methodists are truly mighty in prayer."

"I have heard of the Methodists," said Miss Gray. "They are very droll people, I understand; don't they wear poke bonnets and call one another 'thee' and 'thou'?"

"No. You are thinking of the Quakers,—a very fine body of sturdy Nonconformists, who have suffered for their principles, and borne a noble testimony in England and America and elsewhere, for two centuries."

"Now about preaching," said Miss Gray, suddenly changing the line of inquiry. "How is it possible to preach as you do?"

"Do you mean without notes?"

"I mean altogether, Mr. Whiteman. You seemed to have no difficulty, and to see everything so clearly, and really, if I may say so, you seemed to be more in heaven than on earth."

"Some clergymen of the Church of England preach quite as freely."

"Oh no, Mr. Whiteman; I am quite sure you are mistaken there. All the

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clergymen I know read their sermons, and one sermon is so like another that I am positive I could often hardly tell which is which."

"Possibly so. No doubt there are cases of that kind. At the same time. not a few of the world's greatest preachers have belonged to the Church of England. I have their sermons on my bookshelves, and I have perused them with the greatest intellectual and spiritual profit."

"How very kind of you to say so."

"Why, Miss Gray?"

"Because I have always supposed Dissenters hated the Church of England, and spent their time in trying to pull it down."

"Absolutely false! We dissent from the Church of England on conscientious grounds. Our position is perfectly defensible, and our history is simply heroic, But we preach Christ crucified; we are sent to do our part in making known the kingdom of God; the more clearly men discern its nature and its purpose, the less will they look for external aid, and the more they will decline ceremonial patronage."

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"Christ crucified," were words which Miss Gray repeated with a tender sigh.

"Yes, Miss Gray, that is the theme. That is life. The whole mystery of God comes nearer to us in that expression than in any other. Without that I could never preach again. That must indicate the point of harmony between heaven and earth, and the point of harmony between all good men, to whatever communion they may belong. To attempt to settle religious controversies elsewhere than at the cross of Christ is to attempt to dispel darkness without the sun. Christ first, Christ midst, Christ last, is my motto. I feel, Miss Gray, that you love the Christ of God."

The warm tears came into her young eyes, and she was silent.

After a few moments' pause, Miss Gray, following an unexplained mental process, exclaimed—"How can Mr. Runch say that Dissenters are not gentlemen?"

"Mr. Whiteman quietly smiled. "We are quite willing," said he, "not to aspire to the class which Mr. Runch adorns. You will find, Miss Gray, as your life enlarges, that there is a contemptible cant of gen-

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tility, a species of jackdawism too imbecile for exposure. Never be afraid of it. Some men rely upon snobbery as their only mitigation of obscurity. Whether Mr. Runch is one of them I do not know, nor do I inquire, nor is it needful to concern one's self about it. I do not suppose that the sermon you cared for was cared for equally by Mr. Runch."

"Not at all, Mr. Whiteman. I believe he thought you slightly mad."

Nellie moved nearer her father.

"Very possibly. Very possibly. I do not feel annoyed by the remark; indeed, if another quality of man had made it, I should have received it as a compliment. Great subjects do excite and even overwhelm and exhaust me."

"I am sorry," said Miss Gray, "that I named Mr. Runch. I did not mean to do so."

"No harm in doing it, Miss Gray, it brings up one side of our case as Dissenters. It reminds us that there are little penalties as well as large ones connected with honest Nonconformity. It is after all a very little penalty to be snubbed by a man whom I would not have reckoned

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with the dogs of my father's flock, and I am sorry even if in my tone I have betrayed any warmth in remarking upon his impertinence."

When Mr. Whiteman uttered a sentence of this kind, his face kindled with a new expressiveness. I think I see him as the scorn made his lips writhe for a moment. I think, too, I see those eloquent lips as the scorn passed away and allowed their natural sweetness to return. Well for Whiteman that he had given himself to prayer, and well for his opponents too! From this point the interview took a new turn. Miss Gray would know something of the history of Nonconformity, the sufferings of its followers, the secret of their inspiration, and their methods of progress. Then she would suddenly revert to religious mysteries as they had, from her point of view, been peculiarly apprehended by the Nonconformist mind. Had not the Nonconformists been very bold, almost irreverent, in venturing to make prayers for themselves, and was it not a dangerous thing to leave every man to make his own sermons and speak them right off to all sorts of people?

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"And, Mr. Whiteman, does every Dissenting minister preach as well as you do?"

Whiteman could not but be amused by the *naïveté* of the inquiry. "You make me blush, Miss Gray," said he. "The fact probably is that some preach better and some preach worse. But we do not set up one standard for all. Every man in his own order is our motto. Our concern is more about *what* is preached than *how* it is preached."

Then Miss Gray would look at the books, and wonder if they were too deep for her to read and if papa would be willing for her to read them. She said she hated Mr. Runch, and was not at all surprised that such people should have persecuted the Nonconformists, and were only too glad to get what respectability they could from going to church and mumbling words they had not sense to understand. Mr. Whiteman, while amused at these running comments, did not encourage them, viewing them simply as a method of compensating for Mr. Runch's rudeness, for which rudeness Mr. Whiteman cared about as much as he cared for the wind that



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blew a thousand years ago. Nellie, however, was more of a partisan. Mentally she cast in her lot with Miss Gray, and hated poor Runch with most deadly animosity, and in spirit she kicked all his ancestors and jumped upon them. Nellie's was not a strictly judicial mind, Nellie being, in truth, more an executioner than a judge.

When the recital of the whole occurrence had been concluded, I exclaimed with undue feeling, "Oh, Whiteman, I envy you; what do you think of it all? Can you see the end of it?"

"No," said he. "Probably there will be no end. Why should there be either tragedy or comedy in such a simple tale? I was as much struck by Miss Gray's earnestness as by her common-sense. Her mind is thoroughly alive. Had her lot been cast in other circumstances, she would have been very energetic in the propagation of her opinions; but now, in all probability, her course will be simply one of quiet usefulness."

"Oh, dear!" said I, without knowing why.

"A new set of ideas has been started in

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my mind. I will have my thoughts committed to writing as soon as I can, and you and Paterson must come and hear my views. I think I see light upon a great question. I think I see the outline of such a church as the age requires."

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# PART II.

## *REFLECTION.*

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## EPILOGUE.

In the preparation of this Jubilee memorial review I have drawn freely upon many contributions which I have made to the press during the last twenty years, notably upon a book, long out of print, which I published under the title of *Weaver Stephen*. On the other hand, not a little of the book is so varied in form as now to see the light for the first time. I claim for this review that it is faithful to dissenting life as it is seen in England to-day. I say in England, because there is no dissenting life as we know that term in all the shades of its meanings, in Scotland, in Ireland, in America, or in Australia. There is an Established church in Scotland, but there is not an established sacerdotalism. Dissent in Scotland is political: Dissent in England is both political and religious,—mainly religious, because spiritual nonconformity maintains that any church

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established by law proceeds on a false conception of Christ's purpose in founding and training His church. Spiritual nonconformity further maintains that though every incidental grievance created by law were now and for ever removed, the greatest grievance of all would remain, that infinite grievance being that Jesus Christ Himself is discrowned and degraded by being put under the patronage and control of the secular power. Church controlling State may be a natural and desirable development, but State controlling church is, to the nonconformist mind, a most horrible and revolting irony.

It must never be supposed that dissenters are not fully alive to the cost which they have to pay in the maintenance of their principles. That cost is now mainly social. We are quite alive to the fact that from a social point of view, the best chances of life must always be on the side of an established church. It is so in many a village. It is so in many political relations. It is so in business patronage and success. Many of the sweetest and nicest English people are simply scared and ter-

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rified by the dissent they have never studied and have never even attempted to understand. They think we are a more or less respectable sort of infidel, and that even whilst we pray we occupy quite a sceptical relation to the Lord whom we profess to adore. Nor do they mean to do us injustice. They are strictly faithful to their distinctive environment and training. They are like people who have lived in one country only, and have spoken only one language. They are parochial rather than cosmopolitan. It is very difficult for people who have been reared on a little island to believe that there can be any continents or any classical languages. They admit the geography and they admit the grammar, but they do so with reluctance and with reservations. They know that civilisation is a fact in England, but out of England civilisation is greatly crippled and disfigured. It is very difficult for the average every-day Englishman to believe that French is a grammatical and proper language, and extremely difficult for such an Englishman to believe that the German tongue is other than a laborious effort to bewilder and deceive mankind.

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It is precisely so ecclesiastically. Without being ill-natured or bigoted, it is hard for the established churchman to think that a dissenter can be a right sort of christian. He may be a self-opinionated moralist, but hardly a christian of the genuine type. No doubt a curiosity — no doubt well-meaning—but sadly misguided, yet even now to be prayed for, that he may, as the eleventh hour is tolling, be recovered of his plague! What a pity it is that churchmen and dissenters do not better understand each other! It is in vain to say that sacerdotalism pervades only one section of the national church. That church, by its very rubrics and creeds, is sacerdotal through and through. It is quite a questionable use of language to talk of "the sacerdotal party," for to my mind the whole Anglican church is sacerdotal—here more so, there less so, but everywhere incurably so. He is a sacerdotalist who disputes the right of any christian man to preach the gospel or dispense the sacraments. That is the root. All else is decoration or verbiage. Chasuble, stole, incense, or candle, may be looked upon as so much variable detail, the radical disease

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lies deep down in a preposterous doctrine of apostolical succession, the magic of priesthood, the masonic touch of an initiated hand. It is the delight of my heart to declare that religious nonconformity stands angrily apart from such misconceptions and misuses of the kingdom of God. Religious nonconformity has a solemn testimony to bear, but my fear is that we are led away by side issues or false issues, and that we neglect the very soul of our mission. If every bishop was perfect, if every curate was as good as every bishop, if every parish was worked with clerical fidelity, if every dissenting chapel was emptied because of clerical zeal and efficiency, the central and vital grievance would be untouched — the grievance that the spiritual Christ should be under the patronage of the political Cæsar: a blasphemous inversion of sequence and a mischievous usurpation of prerogative.

I am afraid that nonconformist sacerdotalism, paradoxical as the conjunction of terms may be, is more than possible. Nonconformists may, for example, be on dan-

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gerous ground when they speak of being "regularly trained" for the ministry. Such an expression may, indeed, be perfectly innocent; on the other hand it may be steeped in sacerdotalism. It is not unusual to say with something of a sneer that such and such a man was not "regularly trained;" that is, he did not pass through such and such a process; he does not carry such and such certificates; he has not been ordained by such and such official bodies—therefore he is not a "regular minister," but an interloper, a nomad, an adventurer! All this may not be put into so many words; on the other hand, in so many words it may be even denied and repudiated; yet, almost without responsible consciousness the very spirit of sacerdotalism may penetrate the thought which it expresses. If the meaning is confined to arrangement, to opportunity, to natural fitness for special spheres, no harm whatever attaches to it; but if it limits the Holy One of Israel, if it sets up pedantic standards of qualification, if it attempts to define the sphere within which divine providence should operate, it is drenched in the foulest spirit of sacerdotalism. And it is still more deeply

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drenched if it lays claim to the sole right of "administering" what are called the "sacraments." Personally I should be glad if the term "sacraments" could be expunged from nonconformist intercourse. It is to me inexpressibly pitiable to see nonconformist ministers hastening home on the plea that the approaching Sunday is Sacramental day and the minister must preside over the sacred ordinance. That is sacerdotalism! If the plea is that the minister must preside simply because he is an official minister, the plea is the sheerest priestliness without either the historic dignity or the academic glamour of popery. For my own part I so far accept "the priesthood of believers" as not for a moment to heed whether the Lord's Supper is dispensed by a man or a woman, by a minister or a deacon, by a student or a Sunday school teacher. In describing ecclesiastical relations I would get rid of the invidious word "layman." To divide the church into clergy and laity, except for the sake of convenience, is to come dangerously near a very insidious form of sacerdotalism. If Christians have to be officially divided into clergy and laity I insist upon

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being regarded as a layman. Do I, then, undervalue the Christian ministry? On the contrary, I exalt and honour it; only I would make the source and the quality of its influence not official but personal and spiritual. The Lord must call and qualify His own prophets, and, by His providence, He alone must ordain such variety of method as can efficiently handle multitudes without confusion and without mechanical uniformity. The church in all its commissions should be very careful lest its cleverness in the trick of uniformity be nothing more than a manœuvre of atheism. The prophet must always prove his own vocation, and in very deed no man but himself can ever disprove it, and he only by faithlessness or misbehaviour.

"Our young people are leaving us," is not an infrequent remark made in dissenting circles. Is that to be wondered at? The explanation usually given is (1) that the social life of a town is mainly ruled by ecclesiastical sentiment; (2) that the Established Church offers a service more spectacular, ornamental, and æsthetic, than

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Nonconformity provides ; (3) that dissent, being misunderstood, is regarded as priggish, contentious, and either unaccustomed or under-bred as to conventional usage. It is quite possible that there may be something in this threefold theory. The whole case, as seen from a certain point of view, was put in a less roundabout way by a good-natured opponent who said "the church is right because it is established by law, and in the next place it was much cheaper than dissent." The logic and the sentiment are obviously faulty, yet the notion, as a factor in practice, is bluff with a kind of dismal hilarity—"right because legal" is not a laboured form of logic, and "cheaper" is not the most refined of sentiments. For myself when I have to account for "our young people leaving us" I have no serious difficulty in tracing the process of secession. First of all, there are very few dissenters who know anything about their own principles. I make this charge with real sorrow. Such ignorance accounts for all our complaining. We think we are dissenters because the Church of England is stiff and formal in its services ; or because the clergyman

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is not always what he ought to be; or because the church is uppish, or worldly, or fashionable; or because we like more earnest preaching, or more popular singing; if this is the whole ground, or the main ground, of our dissent, we ought to be ashamed of it, and to abandon it, for it is a dissent founded on circumstances, not a dissent inspired and sanctified by spiritual principles or conceptions. Such a superficial dissent would be turned into an equally superficial assent if the Established Church did not read prayers, if the clergyman were more easy and democratic in manner, if "church people" were more like chapel people, if the curate wore a different kind of waistcoat, and if the "church" provided more free teas and more gratuitous excursions into the country. The sooner our young people abandon this sloppy and soulless dissent the better. I have given my answer already, and on re-reading it I adhere to every word of it, but I may vary the mere manner of the reply without impairing its substance. Unless dissent is spiritual, it becomes at once political and vexatious. And, pray, when is dissent spiritual?

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When it founds itself upon the rock of Christ's purpose in establishing his church. Then, and only then. My contention is that an Established Church, by the very fact of its political establishment, utterly misrepresents the whole intention of the Incarnation of Christ. On that rock I build my nonconformist life. I do not dissent because of High church, or Low church, or ritualism, or sacerdotalism, or local eccentricities of priesthood: I dissent, solemnly and vehemently, because if even my own creed and ritual were politically established, I should be a party to an utter and shameful misrepresentation of the Great Redemption. This is what I mean by being "a religious dissenter"—a term which ought to enkindle and inspire a fervent and inextinguishable enthusiasm.

How can our young people fail to leave us when we train them, in their most impressionable years, in boarding schools in which they are taught that dissent is a social disability and a religious crime? Is it in our power to suspend the law of cause and effect? In such schools child-



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ren are made to feel that dissent means low-breeding, vulgarity, and *gaucherie*. It is supposed to be a thing of bad h's, of bad grammar, and of bad manners. Everything is done to bring it into social contempt, and then parents wonder that children are leaving the ways of their fathers! Would not the wonder be that it should be otherwise? We train our children to despise our principles, and then we wonder that they should despise our habits! Not until dissent recovers its first great spiritual conception will it be intense in its enthusiasm and influential in its service. In the Name of God, I am a RELIGIOUS DISSENTER.

I hail with grateful appreciation the return of the Religious Liberation Society to some of its earliest traditions, notably in the matter of making the spiritual aspects of its policy more prominent. I well remember the time when its meetings (under the name of the Anti-State-Church Society) were invariably opened with praise and prayer and reading of the Scriptures, followed by most instructive expositions

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of Christ's own meaning in the founding of his Church. Those were the great days of modern nonconformity. In those days men had conscience and intelligence on their side, and such weapons always mean peaceful and lasting victory. Alas, I also remember the time when the Liberation Society's annual meetings were presided over, or principally addressed, by ex-Cabinet ministers who made no secret of their agnosticism, their atheism, or their literal secularism. Such men called themselves "political dissenters," and, at great loss of momentary popularity, I denied their right to the title, and I deny it still with growing conviction and intensity of feeling. "Dissent" is a religious term with a definite religious meaning. An irreligious man has no more right to qualify the word "dissent" by the word "political" than he has to declare himself an agnostic dissenter, or a socialistic dissenter, or a republican dissenter. Dissent implies a definitely religious conviction respecting Christ's purpose in founding his church. When that conviction is lost, dissent becomes a despicable squabble for power and property and negotiable votes.

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When dissent ceases to pray it will cease to prevail. In the Name of God, I am a RELIGIOUS DISSENTER.

But would you exclude from the Liberation Society's platform such ex-Cabinet ministers as are known to be either hostile or indifferent to the religious aspects and implications of the subject? Most certainly. That is precisely what I would do. Such men have no right or title to take any part in the proceedings of a Society for "the Liberation of religion." How would they be regarded if, after declaring their agnosticism, their atheism, or their literal secularism, they presided over meetings for the propagation of religion, the exposition of religion, or the honour of religion? There, the absurdity would be seen at once. Yet they preside over meetings for the Liberation of religion! The very religion they have discredited, or suppressed, or abandoned! They first deny or ignore the evangelical and the supernatural, and then they clamour for "the liberation of religion," whereas they should consistently clamour

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for its annihilation. If there was a society for the liberation of the State from any responsibility for the support of religion, such men could consistently belong to it. But see how widely the societies differ,—the one a society for the liberation of religion, the other a society for the liberation of the State ! Only religious men, of very pronounced conviction, could honestly support the former, — men of all sorts could honestly support the latter. Loss of distinctiveness is loss of power. Loss of spirituality means for Dissent derision and defeat. I venture, therefore, to reaffirm that in the Name of God I am a religious Dissenter.

If I were to say this at a Liberation Society meeting it would be received without the slightest sign of enthusiasm. It would be out of date, out of place, out of season. Some persons might even smile at the primitive simplicity, and forgive me because of good intention and verdant piety. If, after I sat down, ever so young a man sprang up and began his speech—"I am a political dissenter," the assembly

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would cheer and shout and stamp and wave pocket-handkerchiefs. I would personally take no part in the irrational and unholy uproar, but the young man would for a few moments be a leader, a pioneer, and a hero. Many a May meeting, however, has made it clear to me that ignorance is often more popular than wisdom. In this case the ignorance supposes that a religious dissenter cannot be a political dissenter. Now what is the fact? It is simply that whilst a political dissenter need not be religious, a religious dissenter is bound to be political,—that is to say, he is bound at the right time and at the right place to give political effect to his religious convictions. Will political dissenters, as distinguished from religious, ever disestablish the national church? Never. And simply because that church is more and other than national, and more and other than political. It is a great religious institution,—it has a creed, a priesthood, an altar, and a liturgy. Political dissent can never disestablish these. But religious dissent can do so. Religious dissent goes to the root of the matter,—alters and rectifies the conception of Christ's Incarna-

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tion, alters and rectifies every superficial theory of church life and church responsibility, alters and rectifies every political relation to the religious conscience. The national church itself is only really strong in proportion as it is really religious. Through its religion it gets hold of the popular imagination and the popular conscience,—it baptises, marries, visits, buries, comforts, the people, as occasion may require. It is in every hamlet, on every hillside, in every city, in every prison, in every workhouse, and in every place it is intensely religious,—superstitious it may be, or sacerdotal, or popish, yet withal profoundly and zealously religious,—and as such continually appealing to the conscience and the trust of the people. Will political dissent ever do away with this? Never. But religious dissent will. How will religious dissent do away with it? By going to the root of the matter: by the spread of Christian knowledge, by popular enlightenment, by the exemplification of great possibilities of gift and service, by faithfulness to apostolic doctrine and policy —thus, and thus only, will religious dissent slowly make its way to recognition and re-

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ception and dominance. But has not religious dissent been doing this from the first, and for successive centuries? No. It has often brought itself under suspicion by a divided policy and by courting the co-operation of aliens and forbidden alliances. It has made unworthy bids for popularity. It has welcomed agnostic cabinet ministers as if they were apostles, and it has discouraged its own truest prophets. It has paid more attention to statistics than to principles. It has been in too great a hurry. It has lost the repose of faith. Religious dissent must get back to the "upper room," or to places which are the legitimate enlargements of that central sanctuary, if it is to clear away all superstition and bring in the golden age of faith and justice and love. In the Name of God, I am a religious dissenter.

The occupation of this stand-point secures strategic and spiritual advantages of the highest importance, not the least being that it justifies the delivery of the most dignified challenge to the supporters of an established church. We are not parties

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to a squabble. This is no merely verbal wrangle. We are at war as to the meaning of Christ in founding His own church; that is the one question which dwarfs every other into insignificance. Nor must that issue be changed. Vestments and services, and rubrics and confessions, must be postponed until this larger and deeper question is settled. What was Christ's relation to the imperial power? What was the relation of the Cross of Christ to the politics of Rome? What favour did Christ ever ask of the princes or rulers of His time? When did the apostles ask the political heads of their day to give money, or patronage, or prestige, to the Christian cause? Never! We hold conversion not to be a political attitude, but a spiritual change of heart,—a reception of the Holy Ghost,—a vital fellowship with God! We further hold that where such fellowship is realised the cause of Christ will be sustained by the consecrated and impassioned love of those who enjoy that solemn and mystic sacrament. The idea of political taxation must be simply abhorrent,—the idea of confusing that holy sacrament with any expression of political aspiration

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is simply blasphemous. Once get our young people to believe this, and they cannot leave us ; not the "cannot" of a fickle will or a variable taste, but the "cannot" of a transcendental and eternal necessity,—the sacred "cannot" of the divine dictum, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

If this were to be said at a meeting of the Liberation Society it would be described as "preaching," "academic," "all very well for a Sunday," "not bad for a Bible class;" but if the young man just referred to exclaimed once more, "I am a political dissenter" the meeting would scream with delight. Run down the bishops, laugh at the curates, mock the ritualists, and the meeting would be turned into "a record," "an immense success," and in my judgment into a spectacle to be pitied and deplored by all good men. Imagine my delivering the doctrine of the last paragraph at a meeting under the presidency of an agnostic ex-Cabinet minister! The man would be bored to death, and would ill conceal his mortification and disgust. Yet the doctrine would be right and the ex-Cabinet minister

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would be wrong, and wrong for the obvious reason that an agnostic or an unbeliever has not the shadow of a title to take any part in a meeting convened in the name of the religion which he ignores or contemns. The example of the agnostic minister would be followed by every leading political journal, and with possible justification, for the political journal does not patronise the meeting, probably does not care for the meeting, certainly would not report the religious aspect of the meeting. But the agnostic minister presided over the meeting and boldly announced that disestablishment was "no longer a little dissenting chapel question." I have known this very expression used at a meeting of the Liberation Society by a titled member of the English aristocracy! Can we wonder that our young people leave us? Can we wonder that "a little dissenting chapel" is too small to hold them? When will religious dissenters no longer beg the fashion of the world to set its feet upon them in token of aristocratic contempt?

Am I, then, disheartened by the whole

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outlook? Yes and No. Protestantism, in all its healthy forms, has nothing to live upon or depend upon but spiritual conviction; hence it must always have a rough time in an age given over to pleasure, to fashion, and to frivolous amusement. Christ was never welcomed to a fashionable feast as a spiritual pastor and example; always as a curiosity, a puzzle, or the most modern thing in social excitement. But the age will change. Gaiety will have its day, and the bubble will disappear. The most penetrating and revolutionary enquiry will one day press itself upon the attention of the world, *What is right?* Always a harassing question,—always a two-edged sword. And frivolity must answer it! Superstition must lay down its idol, and answer it! Priestcraft must choke its incantations, and answer it! In that day, burning as an oven, men will get back to things essential. They will liberate themselves from the cobwebs of chicanery, and invoke the aid of reason and of conscience, and in that day of redemption the Lord's kingdom will rule the world, and the Lord's blessing will be the joy of the whole earth.

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I might extend the whole purview and freely express my opinion of the Liberal Party as seen from the nonconformist standpoint. Nonconformity is frequently spoken of as the backbone of liberalism, but that is an estimate which must be carefully reconsidered. For my own part I would not confine nonconformity to any political section, and I certainly should think twice before giving it wholly over to the Liberal party. That there are in the Liberal party men of truly religious faith and truly religious aspiration cannot admit of even momentary doubt, but that fact shall not prevent my saying, with inexpressible regret, that the leaders of liberalism, with distinguished exceptions, are not identified with the active religious thought of the nation. That fact largely explains to my mind the stagnation and impotence of liberalism. Gladstone is dead. He lived in God, and therefore he lived for man. Gladstone can never be understood if the religious element of his character is left out of consideration. He was first of all, and infinitely above all, a man of God. "He endured as seeing him that is invisible." He lived in the inmost sanctuary.

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Hence his dignity, his influence, his supremacy. Many aspirants to political fame are clever, brilliantly clever, sharp in retort, statuesque in rhetoric, and overpowered by sordid solicitude respecting popular applause, but they live in houses of their own building, houses that are constantly falling into dilapidation, not in the sanctuary preserved inviolate by the Presence and the Majesty of God. I believe that the liberal party is, as to its leaders, almost ostentatiously agnostic. Such leaders are by no means atheistic, and are in many cases infinitely removed from the suspicion of dishonour, but according to my view they are not religious, they do not live the faith-life, they do not, like Mr. Gladstone, go into the battle after rapturous and inspiring communion with God. The evidence is in their own speeches. What are those speeches? Clever, smart, critical, often painfully correct and still more painfully time-serving, but not the speeches that enkindle patriotism and build up beneficent empires. I do not know one empire-builder in the liberalism of to-day. Liberalism is being ruined by little-boy cleverness, by playing

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at cheap progress, by waiting for the slips and faults of other people. If liberalism has a political programme, it certainly has no religious policy. For such a policy I look to the nonconformists. We want a Cromwell. We want a man of supreme faith. We want a living soul.

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The cloud over the town opens and closes so rapidly that at first I can see nothing quite clearly, and as the wind does not blow in my direction, the sounds I hear are indistinct and contradictory in tone. I see the church steeple, and I hear a clang of bells; now and then, too, I catch a noise as of hurrying feet, and a child's cry seems to separate itself sharply from every other sound. How the cloud has buried the town, church and all, and now it rends, and a gleam of light strikes the grey old steeple, and a generous ray shows where the conventicle shrinkingly hides its pale red bricks. A brisk man that in clerical attire, about to spring into a dogcart at the Vicarage door, first laying a plump white hand upon a spaniel's head;

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the other people, obscurely visible, are marked by some variety expressive of diversified character and vocation. One lounges at his shop door, and comments upon the eventless day with nothing more definite than a yawn ; another grins with worldly satisfaction as the copper-shower drips into the bucket which he call his till ; another patters nonsense to his listless neighbour, and chaffs him on the want of natural gaiety ; and yonder—now that the cloud lifts a little—may be seen groups of men who ask questions with vivacious curiosity, and now make way to let the drunkard stagger past in silent condemnation ; and further on are women with heads inclined towards one another, but no sound comes from the mute deliberation. The cloud returns, deepens, lingers, breaks, and vanishes. Now the general outline is clearer, but the detail is huddled and blurred, and though the wind has veered a point or two, it only brings subdued uproar to my ear. Suddenly, with the swiftness of a dream, the whole scene has changed, and a sound not only inharmonious, but conflicting, shatters the Sabbatic peace, now a sound grand in solemnity,

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now a croaking as of discontent, now a cadence soft as the blessing of love, now a staccato as of hardened and impious defiance. This may be battle, but worship it cannot be. Yet it ought to be worship, for all nature seems to be resting—the winds are hushed ; the plough stands still ; the birds seem to be wondering and half afraid ; and the green fields blink and doze in the warm light. Tell me what means this controversial worship, this battle whose torn flags flap on the very altar ? Mischief of some kind there must be ; else why are all the rooks in the church elms so hideously disturbed ? This is not the complacent caw-caw which makes the woodland so unlike the tumultuous town. See how the black figures wheel in the air, now high, now low ; approaching, retreating ; crowding, yet dissolving ; and see how they make the grey old steeple a kind of focus. Is some one below plotting to throw down the sacred pile, and despoil the holy stones ? Has a fire been lighted by felonious hands ? Have the rooks had tidings in advance of purposed sacrilege and ruin ? They are but brown sparrows that chaffer on the roof of the conventicle



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—birds incapable of religious or even decorous agitation; news they have had none, or if they have, they cannot respond to the tragedy of the tale.

What a tumult of words I hear! Men are in high debate, each religiously angry with the other, and wondering how Providence can suffer the wretch to live. It is holy anger on both sides: on the side of the complacent ecclesiastic whose glebelands grow golden profits, and on tne side of the pulpit democrat whose trees grow little but disappointments, but of these many and large. Outsiders cannot understand religious conflicts. The men who wear many-coloured coats scorn the irreverence of almost naked Puritanism. The legitimate priest hates the illegitimate minister. Surely it is but a dream! I am now writhing in ecclesiastical nightmare, not rejoicing in daylight facts and summer blessings. Cursed nightmare! it has given me an inverted and distempered view of things, and has made me think that men who can love the same Christ can assassinate one another. This nightmare is the hideous missionary of

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perdition, and has surely been sent to avenge some omission of duty or lack of human charity. I will awake and betake me to the land where there is no lying nightmare and no deceitful fiction.

Not yet. I must endure the bondage a little longer, nor complain of the galling yoke. Comfort says—"Close eyes and see nothing." Another Spirit says—"To exclude the evil is not to extinguish it; look on, and be wise!" The horizon is now full of light, so that I can see far and near, and the wind is favourable to hearing. What a scene breaks upon my inner vision! Godly men in groups marked alphabetically, each group talking according to a glossary of its own. In one group northward there is a gathering of iron-grey heads knowing everything, favourites of a discerning grace, sure of the number of the elect, with copyright maps of Heaven and Eternity done neatly in Indian ink, the Islands and the Highlands being done with special care, but with a very modified regard for "the adjacent islands of Great Britain and Ireland." Southward a band of men in white linen,

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in black stripes, in embroidered shoulder-pieces, backs rich with gold, fronts beaming with symbolic spangles, voices mellowed with self-satisfaction. On the right hand and the left are other groups, debating, voting, denouncing, now hot with anger, now radiant with hope. Yonder are men praying like prophets who have the ear of the King, and farther away are men who find their altar in their work. Yet what a multitude remains outside the groups—some debased, wrecked, faces burning with shame, eyes alight with fury; others cold, sceptical, disinclined to pray, unwilling to believe! And others ingenious almost to the point of creativeness, inventing creeds, displacing orthodoxies, building great churches in the air, the prophets of Reason and the worshippers of Science. Now the weird dream troubles me. Amid the clamour of controversy I hear the cry of pain. Through persistent demands for the restoration of Augustinian theology, I hear the moan of social discontent and the sharp exclamation of menace and defiance. Revelry and Poverty dwell in the same city. The gin-palace and the church shoulder one another in rough pres-

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sure. The blatant oath strikes across the timid prayer. Would heaven I could awake and forget the uproar and the shame, but the dream holds me as in a chain I cannot break. Who are those blind men crowding down upon me as if they were in terror? They are not really in terror, for they chuckle to one another in mutual felicitation, and bandy lukewarm jests about Evolution, and Biology, and Type; they will not look, or they cannot; people leave them, and they call the people infidels—Science refutes them, and they call Science—godless! Not only are the men blind; they mumble their speech and swallow their words; what I do catch of their utterance is archaic, official, other-worldish; they think that "assembles" is secular, and "assembleth" is religious; they aver that to assail a theology is to assail a Revelation, and that to doubt the Church is to doubt God. Now the cruel nightmare is hard upon me, for it travesties men I have been taught to reverence, and relegates to oblivion or contempt forces which I deemed to be sustained by Heaven. A great cloud—in similitude as a flying eagle—hovers above old altars, old parchments,

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old orthodoxies—it is an omen not to be comfortably interpreted; I would disown it by closing my eyes, yet I should know that the dark Image was still there, and my infatuation would but double my distress.

What is this better voice? No argument is in it, no wrangle of words, no war of lexicons. It is Music! This new voice touches the soul; surely I am now under the welcome spell of some celestial wizardry, for heaven's own singing band cannot be far off; nor is the singing impaired because of harp-sounds, and chiming bells, and boom of infinite organs, but rather sweetened and ennobled by the sublime accompaniment. Now is the morning of the world's Sabbath whitening the east, and empurpling the hills with a glory brought from afar, and rude Argument is driven away by tender Song. "This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." What strange scene is that on the hillside, wherein a white-robed procession takes so prominent a part? Is the brown scar so visible on the green slope a grave? It cannot be. Yet it must be. A burden is being borne

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by the headsmen of the procession, and their intent must be to inter it in that gaping tomb. Yes, I am right! In that grave—too good for so hideous a corpse—they bury grim Controversy, the enemy that sought to rend the Lord's seamless robe, and that spoiled every feast of the Church, silencing all music, and driving sweet children into solitude; down, down, down, the weary burden is lowered, down into unmeasured depths, down into eternal silence. And now what is heard but a voice, tempest-loud, crying Hallelujah! Then the soprano of happy women, and the bass of men whose might has ever been in prayer, can be easily distinguished. Now the white-robed celebrants turn away from the unblest sepulchre, assured that the wilderness shall become a garden and the desert a fruitful field. Their common speech has become tuneful, and words which before were ever followed by battle are now cleansed of all bitterness and strife. The glad men would say they forgive one another did not the very word "forgive" seem to carry with it assumptions which would profane the new harmony. They have gone infinitely beyond

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forgiveness, for they are already in the heaven of love. And who stands in the midst of this embodied Music? He is white and ruddy; His head is as the most fine gold; His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk, and fitly set; His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. What is His name? None other is like Him. Under all His grandeur there is a mute tenderness as of sorrow long past. What is His name? My dreaming soul longs to know, so that every letter may be kissed, and the whole word hidden in the sanctuary of the heart. The white-robed host gathers around Him and kneels in lowly worship, so verily He must be King and Lord, the very Majesty of life! His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold; His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet; yea, He is altogether lovely. Now the people crown Him. Now they cry, Hosanna! Hear Him.

"That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us."

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What an outlook, backward and forward!

What is my life—ay, what? I want to know what my life is. In the light it is comely sometimes, in the darkness hideous; now it is a valiant soldier, mighty in the fray, and now a mean coward, skulking in the darkness, if mayhap it may steal and not be seen, and look as if in prayer it had lost its worldliness and were clear set for heaven. My life says, I will, and I will not; and how it says either I cannot tell; sometimes it is a tender mercy, beautiful as the morning dew, and sometimes a great cruelty, having no law but its own thirst. Like a pendulum, it swings from prayer to blasphemy, and back again to prayer; and if it would die at prayer, I might go to heaven, but if it stop at blasphemy, I must go to hell, and blaspheme there through the ages, and grow worse, and still worse, until God Himself cannot know me as the child baptized in His own name, and held up in public prayer in the old village church a million years before. My life! What is it? Is it eternity be-

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gun ? Is it God set in miniature ? Is it Divinity gone mad ? I fight, and win, and die. I plant the green vineyard and gather purple grapes, and as the wine foams in the full flagon, I fall down and cannot taste the inviting cheer. I build a high house, with roof that wind can never stir nor storm blow through, and when the blazing fire roars from the gleaming hearth, and Comfort, rosy-faced, beams upon me from the pictured walls, I'm sent for and thrust into the grave and prayed over as a failure here—perhaps a failure there ; handed over to the resurrection, to the Great Unknown, to ghost-land, and a cold stone with lies on it keeps my breast well down in the cold earth.

What is my life ? A youthhood bright with cloudless hope ; a passion ; an eye at a telescope ; a picture *merely* living, with quivering joy throbbing through its colours and making them palpitate with life. A hand upon a lock easily turned, and the door opening upon green fields and vineyards, and orchards blushing with the loveliness of May. No pain or ache, no twist in the long string of pearls ; a face

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at every corner beckoning me with sweet smiles; a wind southerly, and rich with promises and blessings; a wild strength; a scornful laugh at difficulty; a challenge to presumptuous rivalry; a victory ere the fight began. O youthhood! It was then that destiny whispered to me; then the face came like a revelation, and the voice came from a cloud, and the other life came which made mine immortal. And childhood was forgotten, the white mice, the busy squirrel, the drawer full of childhood's treasure,—all gone, all laughed at, as I stood at the top of the high ladder that overlooks the noble paths of manhood. I could not die. Where could death strike me? A breast clad in the armour of perfect health; a head that never throbbed with pain; a heart sound as forest oak,—these laughed at death, and bade the monster throw his weapons down and be a conquered ally. The doctor was for old women and misborn men, with leeches, pills, blisters, mixtures as before: a slope into the grave, the paid servant of Mortality and Ruin. Life was then a wild ha! ha! a summer picnic; a casket full of glittering jests and quips and

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cranks ; a stealthy look at beauty ; a long evening talk ; a moonlight stroll ; a row on a stream of molten silver. It was all sweet nonsense ; words with double meanings ; seriousness spoken as irony ; a pleading Will you ? an answering If you will. Such bond-making, such oaths of fealty, such troth-plighting. Oh, my soul, half blind with tearful memories, the long green lane is passed, and what remains is stony, bleak,—a rough road down into old age and helplessness.

But can such summers die ? Can the colouring fade out—the may, the lilac, the chestnut bloom, the laburnum gold ? Will the summer birds cease their song—the blackbird, the thrush, the nightingale ? I have seen all, heard all, and they are just going. Why will they go ? Why not always here ? Does it become too cold for them ? Do they feel the warning chill, and think of flight ? Why not think of me ? "What will he do ?" they might say—"do when we have gone, when the flowers die, and the green leaves wither, and the winged singers flee away ?"

And the friends that started with me,

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where are they? The brown-haired lad, all smiles, and songs, and jokes; the mother whose embrace was heaven; the kind ones; the hearts that loved me; the tongues that never spoke one word of bitterness—where are they all? It is so cold now that they are not here! Are they waiting for me? Do they ever look for me from the sunny gate of heaven? Are they near me? Do they expect me? Shall we talk old things over again, and be happy with immortal joy? O strange life! so wild, so calm; short as a span, long as infinitude; a low veil of grief, a psalm triumphant, a victory supreme.

What is my life? A sullied robe; a crime concealed; a treason against God. I "know the right, and yet the wrong pursue." I have sinned. I have grieved my Maker. I have played the mean trick; kept back the price; spoken the false word; said Yes, meant No; thought of self first, others last and least. The prayer has been upon my tongue, the loved sin under it. The hymn religious has not cleansed the mouth that sang it. I have bent my knee in prayer, and straightened

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it again to fight. I have wept over sin, and done again the sin that made me weep. I have stopped half-way home, and gone back to have one more day with the devil. I see oaths, vows, promises, lying behind me like tender blossoms shaken from the branches by rough winds in spring-time. If I live, I shall get worse; if I die, I'm lost. The circle round me is fire; I cannot force my way through the burning cordon. My heart aches with the question, What shall I do? If I fight the great flame with straw, how great a fool I make myself! Would I quench it with my tears? It is but a dewdrop shed on Etna —an attempt preposterous and wild. Back again, and still again, and once more, and daily and incessantly the question comes, "What shall I do?"

My life? A ship that started well. All canvas set. A fair wind. A sea all sun. Then a cloud; then a lurid glare; then a lightning-bolt; and the ship staggered in pain and fright. A great north wind, harsh, mighty, tempestuous, and then a sickening fear that I might never reach the shore. Perhaps go down in mid-sea;

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perhaps perish in sight of land ; perhaps go in more lost than found, a wreck to cry over.

My life ? A bright bird, tuneful, brilliant exceedingly ; seeking the sun ; singing as I soar ; cleaving the wind and getting higher, and singing more blithely and more still ; when an arrow strikes me, and I fall bleeding to the earth. Music gone ; heart going ; nothing but my own blood about me.

At this moment I am standing by a woodside in the deep darkness of midnight, where I hear, as it were, the rustling of innumerable people as they speechlessly hasten through the forest. Not a figure can I see, not a tone can I hear, yet I seem to know who comes and who goes by the sound of the hurrying feet. That is a woman's soft tread, and that the run of a little child, and now the sound is as of one who has been lurking in guilty concealment, and goes forth with a stealthy crouch, and again is the slow and ponderous thud as of men who would drive away fear by forced composure, and now is the noise of some who have fallen, but cannot cry for help. This mystery of

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movement pains me. I, too, am dumb, or I would call to the hastening spectres to stop and tell me what they hope to find in the entangled wood. Are they visitors from another world? come to see what they may of human ways, and flying back lest sudden light should reveal their plan? Now I hear a sound as of scuffling, men striving for mastery, and the air is troubled as if charged with the sighing of weak wrestlers. Now a bird flutters uneasily in its nest. Now a shattered branch is wrenched from some sturdy trunk by the leverage of its own weight. Now the soft plash as of a plentiful rain. I am bewildered. Would that someone would make plain what I cannot understand.

*Sea-shore.*—I never saw such water, such heavenly blue, such snowy foam, such golden sand. Surely that fair sea has never been lashed by angry winds, or strewn with wreckage and cruel death. It lives as Music lives; it talks in the cipher of Love. Not a white sail is to be seen on all the gentle undulation. It grows more and more solitary. At first I was pleased with the peaceful scene, but it

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begins to oppress me. The monotony is intolerable. Oh that a child would laugh, or a bird sing, or one white sail would flap against the horizon! This is very weird.

*The Churchyard.*—I know it in my dream, and walk through it as of right. A holy quietness pervades this garden of God. The broad summer day is kind to it, filling it with light, and giving birds heart to sing even upon branches of yew and cypress. We speak of consecrating the burial ground, but the burial ground consecrates the whole town. Men lower their voices as they pass the sod which hides their dead, or gaze upon it as a twice-consecrated sanctuary. The town would be poor but for its churchyard. Here the child plants a flower; here the mother softly calls to children who cannot answer; here the broken heart sighs for restoration; here the Christian is assured that his tears do not impair his victory over death.

Oh, sad, sad, is the story of death! Oh the heart-ache! Oh the silence! Yet the silence is broken as with gracious



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violence. I hear a voice—"I am the Resurrection and the Life . . . Thy dead men shall live . . . And death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more." To this Voice all nature makes glad choral response. And heaven joins the grand enthusiasm, saying, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth ; . . . they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat." Oh to be with them ! sighs the burdened with many a care. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

*Midnight again.*—But full of stars ! Not at all a time of restlessness of mind. Curiously, I see everything that is going on. I see a man who must, from his uncertainty of progress, have lost his way ; yet his cautious foot strikes no obstacle : his hands are put out as if he were blind. He looks up, and his fine face beams with religious amazement, as if he saw friends bending over him, or beckoning him to celestial glory. I thought he was alone, and practically he is, but I observe a sweet girl looking after him as if ready to rush

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forth and save him from unseen danger. She sees ! Her eyes burn with eagerness. Her whole figure is itself a kind of vigilance. On, but slowly, moves the man. He halts. He puts out his hands upwards, as if he would lay hold of the stars he cannot see. By some sense, if not of vision, he must hold them, and hold them as men hold things which are their own. Why does not the child run after him, and tell him the poetry of the night, or lead him safely home ? She knows he liked to be here, and she knows that in his heart there is no real loneliness. I can trust any child who looks as Nellie looks ; that observation is as holy prayer. She needs no suggestion from without. Her heart will tell her what to do. Look ! The wanderer halts again, and leans against a rock ; he speaks ; he prays ; his words are clear :—

"LORD, THAT I MIGHT RECEIVE MY SIGHT."

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*Barnicott & Pearce, The Athenæum Press, Taunton.*

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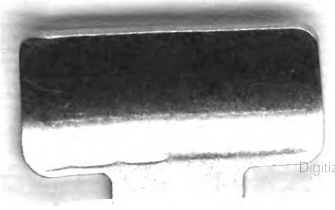

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